

REV. JOHN G. HENRY,
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

John E. Keury

SERMONS

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INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR.

By the infinite mercy of God I have been permitted to issue my Sermons weekly till they have now passed beyond the royal number of a thousand and five ; at this time I am further gratified by a request to write a word of introduction to the ninth volume of the American Edition ; for this additional favor I record my thanks to Almighty God. To me, more than to any other living man, it remains a marvel that my discourses should enjoy so wide and lasting a circulation, and what is far better, so large a measure of the divine blessing. I have kept strictly to the gospel of the Puritans, and have felt no temptation to wander into those new paths which in this country attract so many ; it is with hope for our churches that I perceive that the good old ways have still their followers, and that all professors are not bitten by the Athenian madness, which craves evermore for "some new thing." Young ministers will learn from the present example, that novelty in doctrine is not needful even for the poor success which lies in popularity ; to any other success it is fatal. I have preached what I believed and delighted in, and all my hopes for time and eternity rest in that everlasting covenant of grace which

from my youth up has been my theme. I am not ignorant of the novelties of modern thought, nor do I cling to old-fashioned views out of reverence to antiquity; but I believe, and desire to record the belief, that the doctrines of grace are the marrow of the Gospel, and that the further men advance upon the teaching of Jonathan Edwards, Bunyan, Calvin, Augustine and Paul, the further they go astray.

To my American brethren, all hail ! The Lord be with you, and give His Word free course among you. Your ever-growing nation is the hope of the world. Untrammelled by a State-church, free from a thousand traditional bondages, you occupy a vantage-ground denied to us; much then is expected of you ; and your brethren in England confidently look for great things at your hand. May you be rich in grace at home and abundant in labors abroad. May the millions who fly to you from every shore, never lower your moral and spiritual tone, but rather may they be drawn upward by your elevated godliness, and become "holiness unto the Lord." Across the ocean, my brethren, I salute you,—“The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace !”

I hope the publisher of this volume, my esteemed friend Mr. Sheldon, will allow me to indulge a piece of personal weakness,—as we say in England, to ride a hobby of mine. I have for years taken infinite pains to compose and compile a Commentary upon the Psalms,—it is a huge affair, filling six volumes, of which two are printed, and the third is nearly complete. We have sold two editions of Vol. I.

already, and the gentlemen of the press, and my brethren in the ministry, have awarded me much generous praise. I am, however, very greatly disappointed that I cannot get my favorite work issued by an American house on account of its too great size. I hope that some few who read this will order the English Edition, which is issued cheaply, and may be had of Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, my publishers in London. Pardon this digression, dear brethren, and believe me to be,

Yours in Christ Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

SERMON I

TRAVAILING FOR SOULS.

Of this sermon, a copy was sent to every Baptist and Congregational minister in Great Britain, and several letters have been received, acknowledging the quickening thereby received. May the like result be far more abundant in the New World.

“AS SOON AS ZION TRAVAILED, SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER CHILDREN.”—
Isaiah lxvi. 8.

ISRAEL had fallen into the lowest condition, but an inward yearning of heart was felt in the midst of God's people for the return of the divine blessing; and no sooner had this anxious desire become intense, than God heard the voice of its cry, and the blessing came. It was so at the time of the restoration of the captives from Babylon, and it was most evidently so in the days of our Lord. A faithful company had continued still to expect the coming of the Lord's anointed messenger; they waited till he should suddenly come in his temple; the twelve tribes, represented by an elect remnant, cried day and night unto the Most High, and when at last their prayers reached the fulness of vehemence, and their anxiety wrought in them the deepest agony of spirit, then the Messiah came; the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel. Then began the age of blessedness in which the barren woman did keep house and become the joyful mother of children. The Holy Ghost was given, and multitudes were born to the church of God, yea, we may say, a nation was born in a day. The wilder-

ness and the solitary place were glad for them, and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose. We are not, however, about to enter into the particular application of our text as Isaiah uttered it: the great declarations of revelation are applicable to all cases, and, once true, they stand fast for ever and ever. Earnestly desiring that God may give a large spiritual blessing to his church this morning, through the subject to which my mind has been directed, I shall first ask you to note that *in order to the obtaining of an increase to the church, there must be travail*, and that, *secondly, this travail is frequently followed by surprising results*. I shall then have to show why *both the travail and the result are desirable*, and pronounce *woe on those who stand back and hinder it*, and a *blessing on such as shall be moved by God's own Spirit to travail for souls*.

I. It is clear from the text, "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children," that THERE MUST BE THE TRAVAIL before there will be the spiritual birth.

Let me first *establish this fact from history*. Before there has fallen a great benediction upon God's people, it has been preceded by great searchings of heart. Israel was so oppressed in Egypt, that it would have been very easy, and almost a natural thing, for the people to become so utterly crushed in spirit as to submit to be hereditary bond-slaves, making the best they could of their miserable lot; but God would not have it so; he meant to bring them out "with a high hand and an outstretched arm." Before, however, he began to work, he made them begin to cry. Their sighs and cries came up into the ears of God, and he stretched out his hand to deliver them. Doubtless, many a heart-rending appeal was made to heaven by mothers when their babes were torn from their breasts to be cast into the river. With what bitterness did they ask God to look upon his poor people Israel, and avenge them of their oppressors. The young men bowed under the cruel yoke

and groaned, while hoary sires, smarting under ignominious lashes from the taskmaster, sighed and wept before the God of Israel. The whole nation cried, "O God visit us; God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, remember thy covenant, and deliver us." This travail brought its result; for the Lord smote the field of Zoan with mighty plagues, and forth from under the bondage of the sons of Misraim, the children of Israel marched with joy.

As we shall not have time to narrate many instances, let us take a long leap in history to the days of David. The era of the son of Jesse was evidently a time of religious revival. God was honored and his service maintained in the midst of Judea's land in the days of the royal bard; but it is clear to readers of the Scriptures that David was the subject of spiritual throes and pangs of the most intense kind. His bosom throbbed and heaved like that of a man made fit to be the leader of a great revival. What yearnings he had! He thirsted after God, after the living God! What petitions he poured forth that God would visit Zion, and make the vine which he had planted to flourish once again. Even when his own sins pressed heavily upon him, he could not end his personal confession without entreating the Lord to build the walls of Jerusalem, and to do good in his good pleasure unto Zion. Now, David was only the mouth of hundreds of others, who with equal fervency cried unto God that the blessing might rest upon his people. There was much soul-travail in Israel and Judah, and the result was that the Lord was glorified, and true religion flourished.

Remember also the days of Josiah, the king. You know well how the book of the law was found neglected in the temple, and when it was brought before the king, he rent his clothes, for he saw that the nation had revolted, and that wrath must come upon it to the uttermost. The young king's heart, which was tender, for he feared God, was ready to break with anguish to think of the misery

that would come upon his people on account of their sins. Then there came a glorious reformation which purged the land of idols, and caused the passover to be observed as never before. Travails of heart among the godly produced the delightful change.

It was the same with the work of Nehemiah. His book begins with a description of the travail of his heart. He was a patriot, a man of nervous, excitable temperament, and keen sensibility for God's honor, and when his soul had felt great bitterness and longing, then he arose to build, and a blessing rested on his efforts.

In the early dawn of Christian history, there was a preparation of the church before it received an increase. Look at the obedient disciples sitting in the upper room, waiting with anxious hope; every heart there had been ploughed with anguish by the death of the Lord, each one was intent to receive the promised boon of the Spirit. There, with one heart and one mind, they tarried, but not without wrestling prayer, and so the Comforter was given, and three thousand souls were given also.

The like living zeal and vehement desire have always been perceptible in the Church of God before any season of refreshing. Think not that Luther was the only man that wrought the Reformation. There were hundreds who sighed and cried in secret in the cottages of the Black Forest, in the homes of Germany, and on the hills of Switzerland. There were hearts breaking for the Lord's appearing in strange places, they might have been found in the palaces of Spain, in the dungeons of the Inquisition, among the canals of Holland, and the green lanes of England. Women, as they hid their Bibles, lest their lives should be forfeited, cried out in spirit, "O God, how long?" There were pains as of a woman in travail, in secret places there were tears and bitter lamentations, on the high places of the field there were mighty strivings of spirit, and so at length there came that grand revulsion which made the

Vatican to rock and reel from its foundation to its pinnacle. There has been evermore in the history of the church, the travail before there has been the result.

And this, dear friends, while it is true on the large scale, is true also in every individual case. A man with no sensibility or compassion for other men's souls, may accidentally be the means of a conversion; the good word which he utters will not cease to be good because the speaker had no right to declare God's statutes. The bread and meat which were brought to Elijah were not less nourishing because the ravens brought them, but the ravens remained ravens still. A hard-hearted man may say a good thing which God will bless, but, as a rule, those who bring souls to Christ are those who first of all have felt an agony of desire that souls should be saved. This is imaged to us in our Master's character. He is the great Saviour of men; but before he could save others, he learned in their flesh to sympathize with them. He wept over Jerusalem, he sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane; he was, and is, a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As the Captain of our salvation, in bringing many sons unto glory he was made perfect by sufferings. Even Christ went not forth to preach until he had spent nights in intercessory prayer, and uttered strong cryings and tears for the salvation of his hearers. His ministering servants who have been most useful, have always been eagerly desirous to be so. If any minister can be satisfied without conversions, he shall have no conversions. God will not force usefulness on any man. It is only when our heart breaks to see men saved, that we shall be likely to see sinners' hearts broken. The secret of success lies in all-consuming zeal, all-subduing travail for souls. Read the sermons of Wesley and of Whitfield, and what is there in them? It is no severe criticism to say that they are scarcely worthy to have survived, and yet those sermons wrought marvels, and well they might, for both preachers could truly say—

"The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men ;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

In order to understand such preaching, you need to see and hear the man, you want his tearful eye, his glowing countenance, his pleading tone, his bursting heart. I have heard of a great preacher who objected to having his sermons printed, "Because," said he, "you cannot print *me*." That observation is very much to the point. A soul-winner throws himself into what he says. As I have sometimes said, we must ram ourselves into our cannons, we must fire ourselves at our hearers, and when we do this, then, by God's grace, their hearts are often carried by storm. Do any of you desire your children's conversions? You shall have them saved when you agonize for them. Many a parent who has been privileged to see his son walking in the truth, will tell you that before the blessing came he had spent many hours in prayer and in earnest pleading with God, and then it was that the Lord visited his child and renewed his soul. I have heard of a young man who had grown up and left the parental roof, and through evil influences, had been enticed into holding sceptical views. His father and mother were both earnest Christians, and it almost broke their hearts to see their son so opposed to the Redeemer. On one occasion they induced him to go with them to hear a celebrated minister. He accompanied them simply to please them, and for no higher motive. The sermon happened to be upon the glories of heaven. It was a very extraordinary sermon, and was calculated to make every Christian in the audience to leap for joy. The young man was much gratified with the eloquence of the preacher, but nothing more; he gave him credit for superior oratorical ability, and was interested in the sermon, but felt none of its power. He chanced to look at his father and mother, during the discourse, and was surprised to see them weep.

ing. He could not imagine why they, being Christian people, should sit and weep under a sermon which was most jubilant in its strain. When he reached home, he said, "Father, we have had a capital sermon, but I could not understand what could make you sit there and cry, and my mother too?" His father said, "My dear son, I certainly had no reason to weep concerning myself, nor your mother, but I could not help thinking all through the sermon about you, for alas, I have no hope that you will be a partaker in the bright joys which await the righteous. It breaks my heart to think that you will be shut out of heaven." His mother said, "The very same thoughts crossed my mind, and the more the preacher spoke of the joys of the saved, the more I sorrowed for my dear boy that he should never know what they were." That touched the young man's heart, led him to seek his father's God, and before long he was at the same communion table, rejoicing in the God and Saviour whom his parents worshipped. The travail comes before the bringing forth; the earnest anxiety, the deep emotion within, precede our being made the instruments of the salvation of others.

I think I have established the fact; now for a minute or two let me show you *the reason for it*. Why is it that there must be this anxiety before desirable results are gained? For answer, it might suffice us to say that God has so appointed it. It is the order of nature. The child is not born into the world without the sorrows of the mother, nor is the bread which sustains life procured from the earth without toil: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," was a part of the primeval curse. Now, as it is in the natural, so is it in the spiritual; there shall not come the blessing we seek, without first of all the earnest yearning for it. Why, it is so even in ordinary business. We say, "No sweat no sweet," "No pains no gains," "No mill no meal." If there be no labor there shall be no profit. He that would be rich must toil for it; he that would acquire fame must spend and be spent to win it. It is ever

sc. There must ever be the travail and then the desire cometh. God has so appointed it : let us accept the decree.

But better still, he has ordained this for our good. If souls were given us without any effort, anxiety or prayer it would be our loss to have it so, because the anxieties which throb within a compassionate spirit exercise his graces ; they produce grateful love to God ; they try his faith in the power of God to save others ; they drive him to the mercy-seat ; they strengthen his patience and perseverance, and every grace within the man is educated and increased by his travail for souls. As labor is now a blessing, so also is soul-travail ; men are fashioned more fully into the likeness of Christ thereby, and the whole church is by the same emotion quickened into energy. The fire of our own spiritual life is fanned by that same breath which our prayers invite to come from the four winds to breath upon the slain. Besides, dear friends, the zeal that God excites within us is often the means of effecting the purpose which we desire. After all, God does not give conversions to eloquence, but to *heart*. The power in the hand of God's Spirit for conversions is heart coming in contact with heart. Truth from the heart goes to the heart. This is God's battle-axe and weapons of war in his crusade. He is pleased to use the yearnings, longings, and sympathies of Christian men, as the means of compelling the careless to think, constraining the hardened to feel, and driving the unbelieving to consider. I have little confidence in elaborate speech and polished sentences, as the means of reaching men's hearts ; but I have great faith in that simple-minded Christian woman, who must have souls converted, or she will weep her eyes out over them ; and in that humble Christian who prays day and night in secret, and then avails himself of every opportunity to address a loving word to sinners. The emotion we feel, and the affection we bear, are the most powerful implements of soul-winning. God the Holy Ghost usually breaks hard hearts by tender hearts.

Besides, the travail qualifies for the proper taking care of the offspring. God does not commit his new-born children to people who do not care to see conversions. If he ever allows them to fall into such hands, they suffer very serious loss thereby. Who is so fit to encourage a new-born believer as the man who first anguished before the Lord for his conversion? Those you have wept over and prayed for you will be sure to encourage and assist. The church that never travailed, should God send her a hundred converts, would be unfit to train them; she would not know what to do with little children, and would leave them to much suffering. Let us thank God, brethren, if he has given us any degree of the earnest anxiety and sympathy, which marked soul-winning men and women, and let us ask to have more; for, in proportion as we have it, we shall be qualified to be the instruments in the hand of the Spirit, of nursing and cherishing God's sons and daughters.

Once more, there is a great benefit in the law which makes travail necessary to spiritual birth, because it secures all the glory to God. If you want to be lowered in your own esteem, try to convert a child. I would like those brethren who believe so much in free will, and the natural goodness of the human heart, to try some children that I could bring to them, and see whether they could break their hearts and make them love the Saviour. Why, sir, you never think yourself so great a fool as after trying in your own strength to bring a sinner to the Saviour. Oh! how often have I come back defeated from arguing with an awakened person whom I have sought to comfort: I did think I had some measure of skill in handling sorrowful cases, but I have been compelled to say to myself, "What a simpleton I am! God the Holy Ghost must take this case in hand, for I am foiled." When one has tried in a sermon to reach a certain person who is living in sin, you learn afterwards that he enjoyed the sermon which he ought to have smarted under; then, you say, "Ah, now I see what a

weak worm I am, and if good be done, God shall have the glory." Your longing, then, that others should be saved, and your vehemence of spirit, shall secure to God all the glory of his own work; and this is what the Lord is aiming at, for his glory he will not give to another, nor his praise to an arm of flesh.

And now, having established the fact, and shown the reasons for it, let us notice *how this travail shows itself*.

Usually when God intends greatly to bless a church, it will begin in this way :—Two or three persons in it are distressed at the low state of affairs, and become troubled even to anguish. Perhaps they do not speak to one another, or know of their common grief, but they begin to pray with flaming desire and untiring importunity. The passion to see the church revived rules them. They think of it when they go to rest, they dream of it on their bed, they muse on it in the streets. This one thing eats them up. They suffer great heaviness and continual sorrow in heart for perishing sinners; they travail in birth for souls. I have happened to become the centre of certain brethren in this church; one of them said to me the other day, "O sir, I pray day and night for God to prosper our church; I long to see greater things; God is blessing us, but we want much more." I saw the deep earnestness of the man's soul, and I thanked him and thanked God heartily, thinking it to be a sure sign of a coming blessing. Sometime after, another friend, who probably now hears me speak, but who did not know any thing about the other, felt the same yearning, and must needs let me know it; he too is anxious, longing, begging, crying, for a revival; and thus from three or four quarters I have had the same message, and I feel hopeful because of these tokens for good. When the sun rises the mountain tops first catch the light, and those who constantly live near to God will be the first to feel the influence of the coming refreshing. The Lord give me a dozen importunate pleaders and lovers of souls, and by his grace we will shake

all London from end to end yet. The work would go on without the mass of you, Christians; many of you only hinder the march of the army; but give us a dozen lion-like, lamb-like men, burning with intense love to Christ and souls, and nothing will be impossible to their faith. The most of us are not worthy to unloose the shoe-latches of ardent saints. I often feel I am not so myself, but I aspire and long to be reckoned among them. Oh, may God give us this first sign of the travail in the earnest ones and twos.

By degrees the individuals are drawn together by sacred affinity, and the prayer-meetings become very different. The brother who talked twenty minutes of what he called prayer, and yet never asked for a single thing, gives up his oration and falls to pleading with many tears and broken sentences: while the friend who used to relate his experience and go through the doctrines of grace, and call that a prayer, forgets that rigmarole and begins agonizing before the throne. And not only this, but little knots here and there come together in their cottages, and in their little rooms cry mightily to God. The result will be that the minister, even if he does not know of the feeling in the hearts of his people, will grow fervent himself. He will preach more evangelically, more tenderly, more earnestly. He will be no longer formal, or cold, or stereotyped; he will be all alive. Meanwhile, not with the preacher only will be the blessing, but with his hearers who love the Lord. One will be trying a plan for getting in the young people; another will be looking after the strangers in the aisles, who come only now and then. One brother will make a vehement attempt to preach the gospel at the corner of the street; another will open a room down a dark court; another will visit lodging-houses and hospitals; all sorts of holy plans will be invented, and zeal will break out in many directions. All this will be spontaneous, nothing will be forced. If you want to get up a revival, as the term is, you can do it, just as you can grow tasteless strawberries in winter, by artificial

neat. There are ways and means of doing that kind of thing but the genuine work of God needs no such planning and scheming ; it is altogether spontaneous. If you see a snow-drop next February in your garden, you will feel persuaded that spring is on the way ; the artificial-flower maker could put as many snow-drops there as you please, but that would be no index of coming spring. So you may get up an apparent zeal which will be no proof of God's blessing ; but when fervor comes of itself, without human direction or control, then is it of the Lord. When men's hearts heave and break, like the mould of the garden under the influence of the reviving life which lay buried there, then in very deed a benediction is on the way. Travail is no mockery, but a real agony of the whole nature. May such be seen in this our church, and throughout the whole Israel of God.

II. Now, with great brevity, let us consider that **THE RESULT IS OFTEN VERY SURPRISING.** It is frequently surprising for *rapidity*. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." God's works are not tied by time. The more spiritual a force is the less it lies within the chains of time. The electric current, which has a greater nearness to the spiritual than the grosser forms of materialism, is inconceivably rapid from that very reason, and by it time is all but annihilated. The influences of the Spirit of God are a force most spiritual, and more quick than any thing beneath the sun. As soon as we agonize in soul the Holy Spirit can, if he pleases, convert the person for whom we have pleaded. While we are yet speaking he hears, and before we call he answers. Some calculate the expected progress of a church by arithmetic ; and I think I have heard of arithmetical sermons in which there have been ingenious calculations as to how many missionaries it would take to convert the world, and how much cash would be demanded. Now, there is no room here for the application of mathematics ; spiritual forces are not calculable by an

arithmetic which is most at home in the material universe. A truth which is calculated to strike the mind of one man to-day may readily enough produce a like effect upon a million minds to-morrow. The preaching which moves one heart needs not be altered to tell upon ten thousand. With God's Spirit our present instrumentalities will suffice to win the world to Jesus ; without him, ten thousand times as much apparent force would be only so much weakness. The spread of truth, moreover, is not reckonable by time. During the ten years which ended in 1870, such wondrous changes were wrought throughout the world that no prophet would have been believed had he foretold them. Reforms have been accomplished in England, in the United States, in Germany, in Spain, in Italy, which according to ordinary reckoning, would have occupied at least one hundred years. Things which concern the mind cannot be subjected to those regulations of time which govern steamboats and railways ; in such matters God's messengers are flames of fire. The Spirit of God is able to operate upon the minds of men instantaneously : witness the case of Paul. Between now and to-morrow morning he could excite holy thought in all the minds of all the thousand millions of the sons of Adam ; and if prayer were mighty enough, and strong enough, why should it not be done on some bright day ? We are not straitened in him, we are straitened in our own bowels. All the fault lies there. Oh for the travail that would produce immediate results.

But the result is surprising, not only for its rapidity, but for *the greatness of it*. It is said, " Shall a nation be born at once ? " As soon as ever Zion was in distress concerning her children, tens of thousands came and built up Jerusalem, and re-established her fallen state. So, in answer to prayer, God not only bestows speedy blessings, but great blessings. There were fervent prayers in that upper room " before the day of Pentecost had fully come," and what a great answer it was when, after Peter's sermon, some three thou-

and were ready to confess their faith in Christ, and to be baptized. Shall we never see such things again? Is the Spirit straitened? Has his arm waxed short? Nay, verily, but we clog and hinder him. He cannot do any mighty work here because of our unbelief; and, if our unbelief were cast out, and if prayer went up to God with eagerness, and vehemence, and importunity, then would a blessing descend so copious as to amaze us all.

But enough of this, for I must needs pass on to the next point.

III. THIS TRAVAIL AND ITS RESULT ARE ABUNDANTLY DESIRABLE; pre-eminently desirable at this hour. The world is perishing for a lack of knowledge. Did any one among us ever lay China on his heart? Your imagination cannot grapple with the population of that mighty empire, without God, without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. But it is not China alone; there are other vast nations lying in darkness; the great serpent hath coiled himself around the globe, and who shall set the world free from him? Reflect upon this one city with its three millions. What sin the moon sees! What sin the Sabbath sees! Alas for the transgressions of this wicked city. Babylon of old could not have been worse than London is, nor so guilty, for she had not the light that London has received. Brethren, there is no hope for China, no hope for the world, no hope for our own city, while the church is sluggish and lethargic. Through the church the blessing is usually bestowed. Christ multiplies the bread, and gives it to the disciples; the multitudes can only get it through the disciples. Oh, it is time, it is high time that the churches were awakened to seek the good of dying myriads. Moreover, brethren, the powers of evil are ever active. We may sleep, but Satan sleepeth never. The church's plough lies yonder, rusting in the furrow; do you not see it to your shame? But the plough of Satan goes from end to

end of his great field, he leaves no headland, but he ploughs deep while sluggish churches sleep. May we be stirred as we see the awful activity of evil spirits and persons who are under their sway. How industriously pernicious literature is spread abroad, and with what a zeal do men seek for fresh ways of sinning. He is eminent among men who can invent fresh songs to gratify the lascivious tongue, or find new spectacles to delight unclean eyes. O God, are thine enemies awake, and only thy friends asleep? O Sufferer, once bathed in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, is there not one of the twelve awake but Judas? Are they all asleep except the traitor? May God arouse us for his infinite mercy's sake.

Besides this, my brethren, when a church is not serving God, mischief is brewing within herself. While she is not bringing others in, her own heart is becoming weak in its pulsations, and her entire constitution is a prey to decline. The church must either bring forth children unto God, or else die of consumption: she has no alternative but that. A church must either be fruitful or rot, and of all things, a rotting church is the most offensive. Would God we could bury our dead churches out of our sight, as Abraham buried Sarah, for above ground they breed a pestilence of scepticism; for men say, "Is this religion?" and taking it to be so, they forego true religion altogether.

And then, worst of all is, God is not glorified. If there be no yearning of heart in the church, and no conversions, where is the travail of the Redeemer's soul? Where, Immanuel, where are the trophies of thy terrible conflict? Where are the jewels for thy crown? Thou shalt have thine own, thy Father's will shall not be frustrated; thou shalt be adored; but as yet we see it not. Hard are men's hearts, and they will not love thee; unyielding are their wills, and they will not own thy sovereignty. Oh! weep because Jesus is not honored. The foul oath still curdles our blood as we hear it, and blasphemy usurps the place of grateful

sing. Oh! by the wounds and bloody sweat, by the cross and nails, and spear, I beseech you followers of Christ, be in earnest, that Jesus Christ's name may be known and loved through the earnest agonizing endeavors of the Christian church.

IV. And now I must come near to a close, by, in the fourth place, noticing THE WOE WHICH WILL SURELY COME TO THOSE WHO HINDER THE TRAVAIL OF THE CHURCH, and so prevent the bringing forth of her children. An earnest spirit cannot complete its exhortations to zeal without pronouncing a denunciation upon the indifferent. What said the heroine of old who had gone forth against the enemies of Israel, when she remembered coward spirits? "Curse ye Merōz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Some such curse will assuredly come upon every professing Christian who is backward in helping the church in the day of her soul's travail. And who are they that hinder her? I answer, every worldly Christian hinders the progress of the gospel. Every member of a church who is living in secret sin, who is tolerating in his heart any thing that he knows to be wrong, who is not seeking eagerly his own personal sanctification, is to that extent hindering the work of the Spirit of God. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," for to the extent that we maintain known unholiness, we restrain the Spirit. He cannot work by us as long as any conscious sin is tolerated. It is not overt breaking of commandments that I am now speaking of, brethren, but I include worldliness also—a care for carnal things, and a carelessness about spiritual things, having enough grace just to make us hope that you are a Christian, but not enough to prove you are; bearing a shrivelled apple here and there on the topmost bough, but not much fruit; this I mean, this partial barrenness, not complete enough to condemn, yet complete

enough to restrain the blessing, this robs the treasury of the church, and hinders her progress. O brethren, if any of you are thus described, repent and do your first works; and God help you to be foremost in proportion as you have been behind.

They are also guilty who distract the mind of the church from the subject in hand. Anybody who calls off the thoughts of the church from soul-saving is a mischief-maker. I have heard it said of a minister, "He greatly influences the politics of the town." Well, it is a very doubtful good in my mind, a very doubtful good indeed. If the man, keeping to his own calling of preaching the gospel, happens to influence these meaner things, it is well, but any Christian minister who thinks that he can do two things well, is mistaken. Let him mind soul-winning, and not turn a Christian church into a political club. Let us fight out our politics somewhere else, but not inside the church of God. There our one business is soul-winning, our one banner is the cross, our one leader is the crucified King. Inside the church there may be minor things that take off the thoughts of men from seeking souls,—little things that can be made beneath the eye that is microscopical, to swell into great offences. Oh, my brethren, let us, while souls are perishing, waive personal differences. "It must need be that offences come, but woe unto him by whom the offence cometh;" but, after all, what can there be that is worth taking notice of, compared with glorifying Christ. If our Lord and Master would be honored by your being a doormat for his saints to wipe their feet on, you would be honored to be in the position; and if there shall come glory to God by your patient endurance, even of insult and contumely, be glad in your heart that you are permitted to be nothing that Christ may be all in all. We must by no means turn aside to this or that; not even golden apples must tempt us in this race! There lies the mark, and un-

til it is reached, we must never pause, but onward press, for Christ's cause and crown.

Above all, my brethren, we shall be hindering the travail of the church if we do not share in it. Many church members think that if they do nothing wrong, and make no trouble, then they are all right. Not at all, sir; not at all. Here is a chariot, and we are all engaged to drag it. Some of you do not put out your hands to pull; well, then, the rest of us have to labor so much the more; and the worst of it is we have to draw you also. While you do not add to the strength which draws, you increase the weight that is to be drawn. It is all very well for you to say, "But I do not hinder"; you do hinder, you cannot help hindering. If a man's leg does not help him in walking, it certainly hinders him. Oh, I cannot bear to think of it. That I should be a hinderance to my own soul's growth is bad indeed; but that I should stand in the way of the people of God and cool their courage, and damp their ardor—my Master, let it never be! Sooner let me sleep among the clods of the valley, than be a hinderance to the meanest work that is done for thy name.

V. And now I shall close, not with this note of woe, but with **A WORD OF BLESSING**. Depend upon it there shall come a great blessing to any of you who feel the soul travail that brings souls to God. Your own heart will be watered. You know the old illustration, so often used that it is now almost hackneyed, of the two travellers, who passed a man frozen in the snow, and thought to be dead; and the one said, "I have enough to do to keep myself alive, I will hasten on;" but the other said, "I cannot pass a fellow-creature while there is the least breath in him." He stooped down and began to warm the frozen man by rubbing him with great vigor; and at last the poor fellow opened his eyes, came back to life and animation, and walked along with the man who had restored him to life; and what think

you was one of the first sights they saw? it was the man who so selfishly took care of himself frozen to death. The good Samaritan had preserved his own life by rubbing the other man; the friction he had given had caused the action of his own blood, and kept him in vigor. You will bless yourselves if you bless others.

Moreover, will it not be a joy to feel that you have done what you could? It is always well on a Sunday evening for a preacher to feel when he gets home, "Well, I may not have preached as I could wish, but I have preached the Lord Jesus, and poured forth all my heart and I could do no more." He sleeps soundly on that. After a day spent in doing all the good you can, even if you have met with no success, you can lean your head on Christ's bosom and fall asleep, feeling that if souls be not gathered, yet you have your reward. If men are lost, it is some satisfaction to us that they were not lost because we failed to tell them the way of salvation. But what a comfort it will be to you supposing you should be successful in bringing some to Christ. Why it will set all the bells of your soul ringing. There is no greater joy except the joy of our own communion with Christ, than this of bringing others to trust the Saviour. Oh seek this joy and pant after it. And what if you should see your own children converted? You have long hoped for it, but your hopes have been disappointed; God means to give you that choice blessing when you live more nearly to him yourself. Yes, wife, the husband's heart will be won when your heart is perfectly consecrated. Yes, mother, the girl shall love the Saviour when you love him better. Yes, teacher, God means to bless your class, but not until first of all he has made you fit to receive the blessing. Why, now, if your children were to be converted through your teaching, you would be mightily proud of it: God knows you could not bear such success, and does not mean to give it until he has laid you low at his feet, and emptied you of yourself, and filled you with himself.

And now I ask the prayers of all this church, that God would send us a time of revival. I have not to complain that I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nought; far from it. I have not even to think that the blessing is withdrawn from the preaching of the word, even in a measure, for I never had so many cases of conversion in my life as I have known since I have been restored from sickness; I have never before received so many letters in so short a time, telling me that the sermons printed have been blest, or the sermons preached here; yet I do not think we ever had so few conversions from the regular congregation. I partly account for it from the fact, that you cannot fish in one pond always and catch as many fish as at first. Perhaps the Lord has saved all of you he means to save; sometimes, I am afraid he has; and then it will be of little use for me to keep on preaching to you, and I had better shift quarters and try somewhere else. It would be a melancholy thought if I believed it:—I do not believe it, I only fear it. Surely it is not always to be true that strangers, who drop in here only once, are converted, and you who are always hearing the gospel remain unaffected. Strange, but may it not be strangely, lamentably true of you? This very day may the anxiety of your Christian friends be excited for you, and then may you be led to be anxious for yourselves, and give your eyes no slumber till you find the Saviour. You know the way of salvation; it is simply to come with your sins and rest them on the Saviour; it is to rely upon or trust in the atoning blood. Oh that you may be made to trust this morning, to the praise of the glory of his grace. The elders mean to meet together to-morrow evening to have a special hour of prayer; I hope, also, the mothers will meet and have a time of wrestling, and that every member of the church will try to set apart a time for supplication this week, that the Lord may visit again his church, and cause us to rejoice in his name. We cannot go back; we dare not go back. We have put

our hand to the plough, and the curse will be upon us if we turn back. Remember Lot's wife. It must be onward with us ; backward it cannot be. In the name of God the Eternal, let us gird up our loins by the power of his Spirit, and go onward conquering through the blood of the Lamb. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON II.

“YOUR OWN SALVATION.”

This sermon has been very largely blessed in conversions. It has been very widely scattered in its separate form.

“YOUR OWN SALVATION.”—Philippians II. 12.

WE select the words, “*your own salvation*,” as our text this morning, not out of any singularity, or from the slightest wish that the brevity of the text should surprise you; but because our subject will be the more clearly before you if only these three words are pronounced. If I had nominally taken the whole verse I could not have attempted to expound it without distracting your attention from the topic which now weighs upon my heart. Oh that the divine Spirit may bring home to each one of your minds the unspeakable importance of “your own salvation!”

We have heard it said by hearers that they come to listen to us, and we talk to them upon subjects in which they have no interest. You will not be able to make this complaint to-day, for we shall speak only of “your own salvation;” and nothing can more concern you. It has sometimes been said that preachers frequently select very unpractical themes. No such objection can be raised to-day, for nothing can be more practical than this; nothing more needful than to urge you to see to “your own salvation.” We have even heard it said that ministers delight in abstruse subjects, paradoxical dogmas, and mysteries surpassing comprehension; but assuredly, we will keep to plain sailing this morning. No

sublime doctrines, no profound questions shall perplex you ; you shall only be called on to consider "your own salvation : " a very homely theme, and a very simple one, but for all that, the most weighty that can be brought before you. I shall seek after simple words also, and plain sentences, to suit the simplicity and plainness of the subject, that there may be no thought whatever about the speaker's language, but only concerning this one, sole, only topic, "your own salvation." I ask you all, as reasonable men who would not injure or neglect yourselves, to lend me your most serious attention. Chase away the swarming vanities which buzz around you, and let each man think for himself upon "his own salvation." Oh may the Spirit of God set each one of you apart in a mental solitude, and constrain you each one, singly, to face the truth concerning his own state ! Each man apart, each woman apart ; the father apart, and the child apart : may you now come before the Lord in solemn thought, and may nothing occupy your attention but this : "your own salvation."

I We will begin this morning's meditation by noting
THE MATTER UNDER CONSIDERATION—*Salvation!*

Salvation ! a great word, not always understood, often narrowed down, and its very marrow overlooked. Salvation ! This concerns every one here present. We all fell in our first parent ; we have all sinned personally ; we shall all perish unless we find salvation. The word salvation contains within it *deliverance from the guilt of our past sins*. We have broken God's law each one of us, more or less flagrantly, we have all wandered the downward road though each has chosen a different way. Salvation brings to us the blotting out of the transgressions of the past, acquittal from criminality, purging from all guiltiness, that we may stand accepted before the great Judge. What man in his sober senses will deny that forgiveness is an unspeakably desirable blessing !

But salvation means more than that: it includes *deliverance from the power of sin*. Naturally we are all fond of evil, and we run after it greedily; we are the bondslaves of iniquity, and we love the bondage. This last is the worst feature of the case. But when salvation comes it delivers the man from the power of sin. He learns that it is evil, and he regards it as such, loathes it, repents that he has ever been in love with it, turns his back upon it, becomes, through God's Spirit, the master of his lusts, puts the flesh beneath his feet, and rises into the liberty of the children of God. Alas! there are many who do not care for this: if this be salvation they would not give a farthing for it. They love their sins; they rejoice to follow the devices and imaginations of their own corrupt hearts. Yet be assured, this emancipation from bad habits, unclean desires, and carnal passions, is the main point in salvation, and if it be not ours, salvation in its other branches is not and cannot be enjoyed by us. Dear hearer, dost thou possess salvation from sin? hast thou escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust? If not, what hast thou to do with salvation? To any right-minded man deliverance from unholy principles is regarded as the greatest of all blessings. What thinkest thou of it?

Salvation includes *deliverance from the present wrath of God* which abides upon the unsaved man every moment of his life. Every person who is unforgiven is the object of divine wrath. "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." I frequently hear the statement that this is a state of probation. This is a great mistake, for our probation has long since passed. Sinners have been proved, and found to be unworthy; they have been "weighed in the balances," and "found wanting." If you have not believed in Jesus, condemnation already rests upon you: you are reprieved a while, but your condem-

nation is recorded. Salvation takes a man from under the cloud of divine wrath, and reveals to him the divine love. He can then say, "O God, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." Oh, it is not hell hereafter which is the only thing a sinner has to fear, it is the wrath of God which rests upon him now. To be unreconciled to God now is an awful thing: to have God's arrow pointed at you as it is at this moment, even though it fly not from the string as yet, is a terrible thing. It is enough to make you tremble from head to foot when you learn that you are the target of Jehovah's wrath: "he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." Every soul that is unreconciled to God by the blood of his Son is in the gall of bitterness. Salvation at once sets us free from this state of danger and alienation. We are no longer the "children of wrath, even as others," but are made children of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. What can be conceived more precious than this?

And then, we lastly receive that part of salvation which ignorant persons put first, and make to be the whole of salvation. In consequence of our being delivered from the guilt of sin, and from the power of sin, and from the present wrath of God, we are *delivered from the future wrath of God*. Unto the uttermost will that wrath descend upon the souls of men when they leave the body and stand before their Maker's bar, if they depart this life unsaved. To die without salvation is to enter into damnation. Where death leaves us, there judgment finds us; and where judgment finds us, eternity will hold us for ever and ever. "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still," and he that is wretched as a punishment for being filthy, shall be hopelessly wretched still. Salvation delivers the soul from going down into the pit of hell. We being justified, are no longer liable to punishment, because we are no longer chargeable with guilt. Christ Jesus bore the wrath of God that we might never bear it. He has made a full atonement to the justice of

God for the sins of all believers. Against him that believeth there remaineth no record of guilt ; his transgressions are blotted out, for Christ Jesus hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. What a comprehensive word then is this—"salvation !" It is a triumphant deliverance from the guilt of sin, from the dominion of it, from the curse of it, from the punishment of it, and ultimately from the very existence of it. Salvation is the death of sin, its burial, its annihilation, yea, and the very obliteration of its memory ; for thus saith the Lord : "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Beloved hearers, I am sure that this is the weightiest theme I can bring before you, and therefore I cannot be content unless I see that it grasps you and holds you fast. I pray you give earnest heed to this most pressing of all subjects. If my voice and words cannot command your fullest attention, I could wish to be dumb, that some other pleader might with wiser speech draw you to a close consideration of this matter. Salvation appears to me to be of the first importance, when I think of what it is in itself, and for this reason I have at the outset set it forth before your eyes ; but you may be helped to remember its value if you consider that God the Father thinks highly of salvation. It was on his mind or ever the earth was. He thinks salvation a lofty business, for he gave his Son that he might save rebellious sinners. Jesus Christ, the only Begotten, thinks salvation most important, for he bled, he died to accomplish it. Shall I trifle with that which cost him his life ? If he came from heaven to earth, shall I be slow to look from earth to heaven ? Shall that which cost the Saviour a life of zeal, and a death of agony, be of small account with me ? By the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, by the wounds of Calvary, I beseech you, be assured that salvation must be worthy of your highest and most anxious thoughts. It could not be that God the Father, and God the Son, should thus

make a common sacrifice; the one giving his Son and the other giving himself for salvation, and yet salvation should be a light and trivial thing. The Holy Ghost thinks it no trifle, for he condescends to work continually in the new creation that he may bring about salvation. He is often vexed and grieved, yet he continues still his abiding labors that he may bring many sons unto glory. Despise not what the Holy Ghost esteems, lest thou despise the Holy Ghost himself. The sacred Trinity think much of salvation; let us not neglect it. I beseech you who have gone on trifling with salvation, to remember that we who have to preach to you dare not trifle with it. The longer I live the more I feel that if God do not make me faithful as a minister, it had been better for me never to have been born. What a thought that I am set as a watchman to warn your souls, and if I warn you not aright, your blood will be laid at my door! My own damnation will be terrible enough, but to have your blood upon my skirts as well—! God save any one of his ministers from being found guilty of the souls of men. Every preacher of the gospel may cry with David, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation."

Bethink you, O careless hearers, that God's church does not consider salvation to be a little matter? Earnest men and women, by thousands, are praying day and night for the salvation of others, and are laboring, too, and making great sacrifices, and are willing to make many more, if they may by any means bring some to Jesus and his salvation. Surely, if gracious men, and wise men, think salvation to be so important, you who have hitherto neglected it ought to change your minds upon the matter, and act with greater care for your own interests.

The angels think it a weighty business. Bowing from their thrones, they watch for repenting sinners; and when they hear that a sinner has returned to his God, they waken anew their golden harps and pour forth fresh music before

the throne, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is certain also that devils think salvation to be a great matter, for their arch-leader goeth about seeking whom he may devour. They never tire in seeking men's destruction. They know how much salvation glorifies God, and how terrible the ruin of souls is; and therefore they compass sea and land, if they may destroy the sons of men. Oh, I pray you careless hearer, be wise enough to dread that fate which your cruel enemy, the devil, would fain secure for you! Remember, too, that lost souls think salvation important. The rich man, when he was in this world, thought highly of nothing but his barns, and the housing of his produce; but when he came into the place of torment, then he said; "Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Lost souls see things in another light than that which dazzled them here below; they value things at a different rate from what we do here, where sinful pleasures and earthly treasures dim the mental eye. I pray you then, by the blessed Trinity, by the tears and prayers of holy men, by the joy of angels and glorified spirits, by the malice of devils and the despair of the lost, arouse yourselves from slumber, and neglect not this great salvation!

I shall not depreciate any thing that concerns your welfare, but I shall steadfastly assert that nothing so much concerns any one of you as salvation. Your health by all means. Let the physician be fetched if you be sick; care well for diet and exercise, and all sanitary laws. Look wisely to your constitution and its peculiarities; but what matters it after all, to have possessed a healthy body, if you have a perishing soul! Wealth, yes, if you must have it, though you shall find it an empty thing if you set your heart upon it. Prosperity in this world, earn it if you can do so fairly, but "what shall it profit a man if he

shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" A golden coffin will be a poor compensation for a damned soul. To be cast away from God's presence, can that misery be assuaged by mountains of treasure? Can the bitterness of the second death be sweetened by the thought that the wretch was once a millionaire, and that his wealth could affect the policies of nations? No, there is nothing in health or wealth, comparable to salvation. Nor can honor and reputation bear a comparison therewith. Truly they are but baubles, and yet for all that they have a strange fascination for the sons of men. Oh, sirs, if every harp-string in the world should resound your glories, and every trumpet should proclaim your fame, what would it matter if a louder voice should say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? Salvation! *salvation!* SALVATION! Nothing on earth can match it, for the merchandise of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. The possession of the whole universe would be no equivalent to a lost soul for the awful damage it has sustained, and must sustain forever. Pile up the worlds, and let them fill the balance; ay, bring as many worlds as there are stars, and heap up the scale on the one side; then in this other scale, place a single soul endowed with immortality, and it outweighs the whole. Salvation! nothing can be likened unto it. May we feel its unutterable value, and therefore seek it till we possess it in its fulness!

II. But now we must advance to a second point of consideration, and I pray God the Holy Spirit to press it upon us, and that is, WHOSE MATTER IS IT? We have seen what the matter is—salvation; now, consider whose is it? "*Your own salvation.*" At this hour nothing else is to occupy your thoughts, but this intensely personal matter, and I beseech the Holy Spirit to hold your minds fast to this one point.

If you are saved it will be "your own salvation," and you yourself will enjoy it. If you are not saved, the sin you now commit is your own sin, the guilt your own guilt. The condemnation under which you live, with all its disquietude and fear, or with all its callousness and neglect, is your own—all your own. You may share in other men's sins, and other men may become participators in yours, but a burden lies on your own back which no one besides can touch with one of his fingers. There is a page in God's Book where your sins are recorded unmingled with the transgressions of your fellows. Now, beloved, you must obtain for all this sin a personal pardon, or you are undone for ever. No other can be washed in Christ's blood for you; no one can believe and let his faith stand instead of your faith. The very supposition of human sponsorship in religion is monstrous. You must yourself repent, yourself believe, yourself be washed in the blood, or else for you there is no forgiveness, no acceptance, no adoption, no regeneration. It is all a personal matter through and through: "your own salvation" it must be, or it will be your own eternal ruin.

Reflect anxiously that you must personally die. No one imagines that another can die for him. No man can redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom. Through that iron gate I must pass alone, and so must you. Dying will have to be our own personal business; and in that dying, we shall have either personal comfort or personal dismay. When death is past, salvation is still our "own salvation;" for if I am saved, *mine* "eyes shall seek the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Mine eyes shall see him, and not another on my behalf. No brother's head is to wear your crown; no stranger's land to wave your palm; no sister's eye to gaze for you upon the beatific vision, and no sponsor's heart to be filled as your proxy with the ecstatic bliss. There is a personal heaven for the personal believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It must be, if you possess it, "your own salvation." But if you have it not, reflect again, that it will be your own damnation. But no one will be condemned for you; no other can bear the hot thunderbolts of Jehovah's wrath on your behalf. When you shall say, "Hide me, ye rocks! Conceal me, O mountains!" no one will spring forward, and say, "You can cease to be accursed, and I will become a curse for you." A substitute there is to-day for every one that believeth—God's appointed substitute, the Christ of God; but if that substitution be not accepted by you, there can never be another; but there remains only for you a personal casting away to suffer personal pangs in your own soul and in your own body forever. This, then, makes it a most solemn business. Oh, be wise, and look well to "your own salvation."

You may be tempted to-day, and very likely you are, to forget your own salvation by thoughts of other people. We are all so apt to look abroad in this matter, and not to look at home. Let me pray you to reverse the process, and let every thing which has made you neglect your own vineyard be turned to the opposite account, and lead you to begin at home, and see to "your own salvation." Perhaps you dwell among the saints of God, and you have been rather apt to find fault with them, though for my part, I can say these are the people I desire to live with, and desire to die with: "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." But, oh, if you live among the saints, ought it not to be your business to see to "your own salvation"? See that you are truly one of them, not written in their church-book merely, but really graven upon the palms of Christ's hands; not a false professor, but a real possessor; not a mere wearer of the name of Christ, but a bearer of the nature of Christ. If you live in a gracious family, be afraid lest you should be divided from them forever. How could you endure to go from a Christian household to a place of torment? Let the anxieties of saints lead you to

be anxious. Let their prayers drive you to prayer. Let their example rebuke your sin, and their joys entice you to their Saviour. Oh, see to this! But perhaps you live most among ungodly men, and the tendency of your converse with the ungodly is to make you think as they do of the trifles and vanities and wickednesses of this life. Do not let it be so; but on the contrary, say, "O God, though I am placed among these people, yet gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men. Let me avoid the sins in which they fall, and the impenitence of which they are guilty. Save me, I pray thee, O my God, save me from the transgressions which they commit."

Perhaps to-day some of your minds are occupied with thoughts of the dead who have lately fallen asleep. There is a little one unburied at home, or there is a father not yet laid in the grave. Oh, when you weep for those who have gone to heaven, think of "your own salvation," and weep for yourselves, for you have parted with them forever unless you are saved. You have said, "Farewell" to those beloved ones, eternally farewell, unless you yourselves believe in Jesus. And if any of you have heard of persons who have lived in sin and died in blasphemy, and are lost, I pray you think not of them carelessly lest you also suffer the same doom: for what saith the Saviour: "Suppose ye that these were sinners above all the sinners?" I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It seems to me as if every thing on earth and every thing in heaven, and every thing in hell, yea, and God himself, call upon you to seek "your own salvation," first and foremost, and above all other things.

It may be profitable to mention some persons upon whom this theme needs much pressing. I will begin at home. There is great need to urge this matter upon official Christians, such as I am, such as my brethren, the deacons and elders are. If there are any persons who are likely to be deceived, it is those who are called by their office to act as

Shepherds to the souls of others. Oh, my brethren ! it is so easy for me to imagine because I am a minister, and have to deal with holy things, that therefore I am safe. I pray I may never fall into that delusion, but may always cling to the cross, as a poor, needy sinner resting in the blood of Jesus. Brother ministers, co-workers, and officials of the church, do not imagine that office can save you. The son of perdition was an apostle, greater than we are in office, and yet at this hour he is greater in destruction. See to it, ye that are numbered among the leaders of Israel, that you yourselves be saved.

Unpractical doctrinalists are another class of persons who need to be warned to see to their own salvation. When they hear a sermon, they sit with their mouths open, ready to snap at half a mistake. They make a man an offender for a word, for they conclude themselves to be the standards of orthodoxy, and they weigh up the preacher as he speaks, with as much coolness as if they had been appointed deputy judges for the Great King himself. Oh, sir, weigh yourself ! It may be a great thing to be sound in the head, in the faith, but it is a greater thing to be sound in the heart. I may be able to split a hair between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and yet may have no part nor lot in the matter. You may be a very sound Calvinist, or you may happen to think soundness lies in another direction ; but, oh, it is nought, it is less than nought, except your souls feel the power of the truth, and ye yourselves are born again. See to "your own salvation," O ye wise men in the letter, who have not the Spirit.

So, too, certain persons who are always given to curious speculations need warning. When they read the Bible it is not to find whether they are saved or no, but to know whether we are under the third or fourth vial, when the millenium is going to be, or what is the battle of Armageddon. Ah, sir, search out all these things if thou hast time and skill, but look to thine own salvation first. The book of Revelation, blessed is he that understands it, but not un-

less, first of all, he understands this, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The greatest doctor in the symbols and mysteries of the Apocalypse shall be as certainly cast away as the most ignorant, unless he has come to Christ, and rested his soul in the atoning work of our great substitute.

I know some who greatly need to look to their own salvation. I refer to those who are always criticising others. They can hardly go to a place of worship but what they are observing their neighbor's dress or conduct. Nobody is safe from their remarks, they are such keen judges, and make such shrewd observations. Ye faultfinders and talebearers, look to "your own salvation." You condemned a minister the other day for a supposed fault, and yet he is a dear servant of God, who lives near his Master; who are you, sir, to use your tongue against such a one as he? The other day a poor humble Christian was the object of your gossip and your slander, to the wounding of her heart. Oh, see to yourselves, see to yourselves. If those eyes which look outward so piercingly would sometimes look inward they might see a sight which would blind them with horror. Blessed horror if it led them to turn to the Saviour who would open those eyes afresh, and grant them to see his salvation.

I might also say that in this matter of looking to personal salvation, it is necessary to speak to some who have espoused certain great public designs. I trust I am as ardent a Protestant as any man living, but I know too many red-hot Protestants who are but little better than Romanists, for though the Romanists of old might have burnt them, they would certainly withhold toleration from Romanists to-day, if they could; and therein I see not a pin to choose between the two bigots. Zealous Protestants, I agree with you, but yet I warn you that your zeal in this matter will not save you, or stand in the stead of personal godliness. Many an orthodox Protestant will be found at the left hand of the Great Judge. And you, too, who are forever agitating this

and that public question, I would say to you, "Let politics alone till your own inward politics are settled on a good foundation." You are a Radical Reformer, you could show us a system of political economy which would right all our wrongs and give to every man his due; then I pray you right your own wrongs, reform yourself, yield yourself to the love of Jesus Christ, or what will it signify to you, though you knew how to balance the affairs of nations, and to regulate the arrangement of all classes of society, if you yourself shall be blown away like chaff before the winnowing fan of the Lord. God grant us grace, then, whatever else we take up with, to keep it in its proper place, and make our calling and election sure.

III. And now, thirdly, and oh for grace to speak aright, I shall try to ANSWER CERTAIN OBJECTIONS. I think I hear somebody say, "Well, but don't you believe in *predestination*? What have we to do with looking to our own salvation? Is it not all fixed?" Thou fool, for I can scarce answer thee till I have given thee thy right title; was it not fixed whether thou shouldst get wet or not in coming to this place? Why then did you bring your umbrella? Is it not fixed whether you shall be nourished with food to-day or shall go hungry? Why then will you go home and eat your dinner? Is it not fixed whether you shall live or not to-morrow; will you, therefore, cut your throat? No, you do not reason so wickedly, so foolishly from destiny in reference to any thing but "your own salvation," and you know it is not reasoning, it just mere talk. Here is all the answer I will give you, and all you deserve.

Another says, "I have a difficulty about this looking to our own salvation. Do you not believe in *full assurance*? Are there not some who know that they are saved beyond all doubt!" Yes, blessed be God, I hope there are many such now present. But let me tell you who these are not. These are not persons who are afraid to examine them

selves. If I meet with any man who says, "I have no need to examine myself any more, I know I am saved, and therefore have no need to take any further care," I would venture to say to him, "Sir, you are lost already. This strong delusion of yours has led you to believe a lie." There are none so cautious as those who possess full assurance, and there are none who have so much holy fear of sinning against God, nor who walk so tenderly and carefully as those who possess the full assurance of faith. Presumption is not assurance, though, alas ! many think so. No fully assured believer will ever object to being reminded of the importance of his own salvation.

But a third objection arises. "This is very *selfish*," says one. "You have been exhorting us to look to ourselves, and that is sheer selfishness." Yes, so you say ; but let me tell you it is a kind of selfishness that is absolutely needful before you can be unselfish. A part of salvation is to be delivered from selfishness, and I am selfish enough to desire to be delivered from selfishness. How can you be of any service to others if you are not saved yourself? A man is drowning. I am on London Bridge. If I spring from the parapet and can swim, I can save him ; but suppose I cannot swim, can I render any service by leaping into sudden and certain death with the sinking man? I am disqualified from helping him till I have the ability to do so. There is a school over yonder. Well, the first inquiry of him who is to be the master must be, "Do I know myself that which I profess to teach?" Do you call that inquiry selfish? Surely it is a most unselfish selfishness, grounded upon common sense. Indeed, the man who is not so selfish as to ask himself, "Am I qualified to act as a teacher?" would be guilty of gross selfishness in putting himself into an office which he was not qualified to fill. I will suppose an illiterate person going into the school, and saying, "I will be master here and take the pay," and yet he cannot teach the children to read or write. Would he not be very selfish in

not seeing to his own fitness? But surely it is not selfishness that would make a man stand back and say, "No, I must first go to school myself, otherwise it is but a mockery of the children for me to attempt to teach them any thing." This is no selfishness, then, when looked at aright, which makes us see to our own salvation, for it is the basis from which we operate for the good of others.

IV. Having answered these objections, I shall for a minute attempt to RENDER SOME ASSISTANCE to those who would fain be right in the best thing.

Has the Holy Spirit been pleased to make any one here earnest about his own salvation? Friend, I will help you to answer two questions. Ask yourself, first, "Am I saved?" I would help thee to reply to that very quickly. If you are saved this morning, you are the subject of a work within you, as saith the text, "Work out your own salvation; for it is God which worketh in you." You cannot work it *in*, but when God works it in, you work it *out*. Have you a work of the Holy Ghost in your soul? Do you feel something more than unaided human nature can attain unto? Have you a change wrought in you from above? If so, you are saved. Again, does your salvation rest wholly upon Christ? He who hangs anywhere but upon the cross, hangs upon that which will deceive him. If thou standest upon Christ, thou art on a rock; but if thou trustest in the merits of Christ in part, and thy own merits in part, then thou hast one foot on a rock but another on the quicksand; and thou mightest as well have both feet on the quicksand, for the result will be the same.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

Thou art not saved unless Christ be all in all in thy soul, Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, first and last. Judge by this, again: if you are saved, you have turned your back on sin. You have not left off sinning—would to

God we could do so—but you have left off loving sin; you sin not wilfully, but from infirmity; and you are earnestly seeking after God and holiness. You have respect to God, you desire to be like him, you are longing to be with him. Your face is towards heaven. You are as a man who journeys to the Equator. You are feeling more and more the warm influence of the heavenly heat and light. Now, if such be your course of life, that you walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of holiness, then you are saved. May your answer to that question be given in great honesty and candor to your own soul. Be not too partial a judge. Conclude not that all is right because outward appearances are fair. Deliberate before you return a favorable verdict. Judge yourselves that ye be not judged. It were better to condemn yourself and be accepted of God, than to acquit yourself and find your mistake at the last.

But suppose that question should have to be answered by any here in the negative (and I am afraid it must be), then let those who confess that they are not saved, hear the answer to another inquiry: “How can I be saved?” Ah, dear hearer, I have not to bring a huge volume nor a whole armful of folios to you, and to say, “It will take you months and years to understand the plan of salvation.” No, the way is plain, the method simple. Thou shalt be saved within the next moment if thou believest. God’s work of salvation is, as far as its commencement and essence is concerned, instantaneous. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ thou art born of God now. If thou dost now stand in spirit at the foot of the cross, and view the incarnate God suffering, bleeding, and dying there, and if as thou dost look at him, thy soul consents to have him for her Saviour, and casts herself wholly on him, thou art saved. How vividly there comes before my memory this morning the moment when I first believed in Jesus! It was the simplest act my mind ever performed, and yet the most wonderful, for the Holy Spirit wrought it in me. Simply to have done with

reliance upon myself, and have done with confidence in all but Jesus, and to rest alone my undivided confidence in him, and in what he had done. My sin was in that moment forgiven me, and I was saved, and it may all be so with you, my friend, even with you if you also trust the Lord Jesus. "Your own salvation" shall be secured by that one simple act of faith; and henceforward, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, you shall tread the way of holiness, till you come to be where Jesus is in everlasting bliss. God grant that not a soul may go out of this place unsaved. Even you, little children, who are here, you youngsters, you young boys and girls, I pray that you may in early life attend to "your own salvation." Faith is not a grace for old people only, nor for your fathers and mothers only; if your little hearts shall look to him who was the holy child Jesus, if you know but little yet, if you trust him, salvation shall be yours. I pray that to you who are young, "your own salvation" may become, while you are yet in your youth, a matter of joy, because you have trusted it in the hands of your Redeemer.

Now I must close; but one or two thoughts press me. I must utter them ere I sit down. I would anxiously urge each person here to see to this matter of his own salvation. Do it, I pray you, and in earnest, for no one can do it for you. I have asked God for your soul, my hearer, and I pray I may have an answer of peace concerning you. But unless you also pray, vain are my prayers. You remember your mother's tears. Ah! you have crossed the ocean since those days, and you have gone into the deeps of sin, but you recollect when you used to say your prayers at her knee, and when she would lovingly say "Amen," and kiss her boy and bless him, and pray that he might know his mother's God. Those prayers are ringing in the ears of God for you, but it is impossible that you can ever be saved unless it is said of you, "Behold, he prayeth." Your mother's holiness can only rise up in judgment to condemn

your wilful wickedness unless you imitate it. Your father's earnest exhortations shall but confirm the just sentence of the Judge unless you hearken to them, and yourselves consider and put your trust in Jesus. Oh! bethink you each one of you, there is but one hope, and that one hope lost, it is gone forever. Defeated in one battle, a commander attempts another, and hopes that he may yet win the campaign. Your life is your one fight, and if it be lost it is lost for aye. The man who was bankrupt yesterday commences again in business with good heart, and hopes that he may yet succeed; but in the business of this mortal life, if you are found bankrupt you are bankrupt for ever and ever. I do therefore charge you by the living God, before whom I stand, and before whom I may have to give an account of this day's preaching ere another day's sun shall shine, I charge you to see to your own salvation. God help you, that you may never cease to seek unto God till you know by the witness of the Spirit that you have indeed passed from death unto life. See to it now, *now*, now, now. This very day the voice of warning comes to certain of you from God, with special emphasis, because you greatly need it, for your time is short. How many have passed into eternity during this week! You may yourself be gone from the land of the living before next Sabbath-day. I suppose, according to the calculation of probabilities, out of this audience there are several who will die within a month. I am not conjecturing now, but according to all probabilities these thousands cannot all meet again, if all have a mind to do so. Who then among us will be summoned to the unknown land? Will it be you, young woman, who have been laughing at the things of God? Shall it be yonder merchant, who has not time enough for religion? Shall it be you, my foreign friend, who have crossed the ocean to take a holiday? Will you be carried back a corpse? I do conjure you bethink yourselves, all of you. You who dwell in London will remember years ago when the cholera swept through our streets,

some of us were in the midst of it, and saw many drop around us, as though smitten with an invisible but deadly arrow. That disease is said to be on its way hither again : it is said to be rapidly sweeping from Poland across the Continent, and if it come and seize some of you, are you ready to depart? Even if that form of death do not afflict our city, as I pray it may not, yet is death ever within our gates, and the pestilence walketh in darkness every night, therefore consider your ways. Thus saith the Lord, and with his word I conclude this discourse : “ Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”

SERMON III.

CONTINUANCE WITH JESUS POSSIBLE. C. 0. 64 III.

This and Number IV. are brief homilies, not printed in the *English* volumes of sermons.

"BUT JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, THEY NEED NOT DEPART."—Matthew xiv. 16.

OF course the Master was right, but he appeared to speak unreasonably. It seemed self-evident that the people very much needed to depart. They had been all day long hearing the preacher, the most of them had not broken their fast, and they were ready to faint for hunger. The only chance of their being fed was to let them break up into parties and forage for themselves among the surrounding villages. But our Lord declared that there was no necessity for them to go away from him, even though they were hungry, and famished, and in a desert place. Now, if there was no necessity for hungry hearers to go away, much less will it ever be needful for loving disciples to depart from him. If these who were hearers only—and the bulk of them were nothing more, a congregation collected by curiosity and held together by the charm of his eloquence and by the renown of his miracles—if these need not depart, much less need they depart who are his own friends and companions, his chosen and beloved. If the crowds needed not through hunger to depart bodily, much less need any of the saints depart spiritually from their Lord. There is no necessity that our communion with Christ should ever be suspended.

To walk with Christ from morn till eve,
In him to breathe, in him to live,*

is no mere wish, no visionary's prayer ; it may be realized ; we need not decline from Jesus. There is no need that the spouse of Jesus should wander from beneath the banner of his love. Mary may always sit at Jesus' feet. There is no law which says to holy fellowship, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further, here shalt thou cease!" There is no set hour when the gate of communion with Christ must inevitably be closed. We may continue to come up from the wilderness, leaning on the Beloved. We need not depart. Yet is it so commonly thought to be a matter of course that we should wander from our Lord, that I shall ask for strength from heaven to combat the injurious opinion.

I. Brethren, THERE IS NOT AT THIS HOUR, to you who love the Lord, ANY PRESENT NECESSITY FOR YOUR DEPARTING FROM CHRIST.

At this moment we may truthfully say of all the saints of God, "They need not depart." There is nothing *in your circumstances* which compels you to cease from following hard after your Lord. You are very poor, you say, but you need not depart from Christ because of penury, for in the depths of distress the saints have enjoyed the richest presence of their once houseless Lord. Being poor, your poverty at this moment may be pinching you : to be relieved from that pinch you need not break away from Jesus, for fellowship with him may be maintained under the direst extremity of want ; indeed, your want increases your necessity to walk closely with your Lord, so that patience may have its perfect work, and your soul may be sustained by the mighty consolations which flow out of nearness to Jesus. Want shall not separate the soul from communion with him

* In answer to inquiries, the preacher begs to acknowledge the authorship of the verses found in this sermon.

who hungered in the wilderness and thirsted on the cross. You tell me that in order to relieve your necessities you are compelled to exercise great care and anxiety ; but all the cares which are useful and allowable are such as will allow of a continuance of fellowship with Christ. You may care as much as you ought to care—and I need not say how little that is—and yet you need not depart from him who careth for you. But you tell me that in addition to deep thought you have to spend much labor to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Yes, but you need not depart for that reason. The carpenter's son is not ashamed of the sons of toil ; he who wore the garment without seam does not despise the smock or the apron. Labor is no enemy to communion ; idleness is a far more likely separator of the soul from Christ. Not to the idlers in Herod's court did Jesus reveal himself, but to hard-working fishermen by the lake of Galilee. If Satan is never far away from the idle, it is pretty plain that it is no disadvantage to be busy. A toil amounting to slavery may weaken the body, and prostrate the spirit ; but even when heart and flesh fail, the heart may call the Lord its portion. There is no service beneath the sun so arduous that you need depart from Christ in it : but the rather, while the limbs are weary the spirit should find its rest in drawing nearer to him who can strengthen the weak and give rest to the laboring.

Do you tell me that you are rich ? Ah, indeed, how often has this made men depart !

“Gold and the gospel seldom do agree ;
Religion always sides with poverty.”

So said John Bunyan, and his saying is true. Too often the glitter of wealth has dazzled men's eyes so that they could not see the beauty of Christ Jesus ; but, oh ye few wealthy saints, ye need not depart. The camel can go through the needle's eye, for with God all things are possible. Men have worn coronets on earth and inherited crowns in heaven. He who was the man after God's own heart swayed a

sceptre. To grow rich in substance does not make it inevitable that you should become poor in grace. Do riches bring you many responsibilities and burdens, and are you so much occupied by them that your fellowship with the Lord grows slack? It should not be so; you need not depart. You can bring these responsibilities and the wealth itself to Jesus, and communion with him will prevent the gold from cankering, and the responsibility from involving you in sin. Very often the servant of God, who ministers for the church of Christ, finds so much to do in watching for the souls of others, and in caring for the various wants of the flock, that he is in danger of losing his own personal enjoyment of his Lord's presence; but it need not be so. We can make all our many works subservient to our personal communion with our Lord, and as the bee flies to many flowers and gathers honey from each one, so may we out of many forms of service extract a sweet conformity to him who was ever about his Father's business. We need not be encumbered with much serving or much suffering. Our surroundings are not to be our victors, but our subjects. We are in all these things to be more than conquerors through him who hath loved us.

Brethren, you need not depart *because of any thing in Christ Jesus*. Those whom we love would not desire us to be always with them, and never out of their sight. A guest is very welcome, but the proverb says that after three days he is stale. A mother does not always want her child in her arms; its face is the epitome of beauty, but at eventide she is glad that those dear blue eyes no longer shine upon her; she is happy to lay her treasure in its cradle casket. We do not always wish for the company of those whom we compassionate; if they will condense their request, and do their errand rapidly, we are best content. But Jesus Christ says to each one of us, his poor dependants, his crying children, "Ye need not depart." When we are weeping, he will lay us in his bosom and give us

rest; when we are famishing, he will entertain us at his royal table, till we forget our misery. He is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother in this respect, for we need not in his instance heed the wise man's caution, "Go not into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity," for we may at all times and seasons resort to him. We may ask, "Where dwellest thou?" and when we receive an answer, we may go forth and dwell with him, and make his house our home. Do you not remember his words, "Abide *in* me;" not merely "with me," but "abide *in* me." The closest contact may be maintained with the utmost constancy.

Ye need not depart, ye may tarry for aye,
 Unchanged in his heart, he invites you to stay,
 He does not despise nor grow weary of *you*,
 You're fair in his eyes, and most comely to view
 Then wish not to roam, but abide with your Lord
 Since he is your home, go no longer abroad
 Lie down on his breast in unbroken repose,
 For there you may rest, though surrounded with foes

¶ Secondly, NO FUTURE NECESSITY EVER WILL ARISE TO COMPEL YOU TO DEPART FROM JESUS. It will always be true, "Ye need not depart."

You do not know what *your wants* will be, yet though you be no prophet, your words will be true if you affirm that no want shall ever necessarily divide you from Jesus, because your wants will rather bind you to him. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." We will draw nearer to him in time of need to obtain the grace we want. We shall never be forced to go elsewhere to find supplies for our spiritual wants. There stands another trader over the way, who fain would have you deal with him—his Infallible Holiness, as he styles himself—but, ah! if you want infallibility you need not wander from him who is "the Truth;" and if you desire

holiness, you need not withdraw from him who is the Holy Child Jesus. To gain all that the superstitious profess to find in Babylon, you need not depart from the Son of David who reigns in Zion. They tell us that we must confess our sins to a priest; we will stay at home, and lay bare our hearts to the High Priest, who sprang out of Judah, who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. They teach that we must receive absolution from one chosen from among men to forgive sins; we go at once to him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission. They tell us that we should continue in morning and evening prayers; we do so, and offer our matins and our vespers where no bells call us save the bells upon our High Priest's garments. Our daily office may not be according to the use of Sarum, but is according to the use of those who worship God in spirit and in truth. They cry up their daily sacrifice of the Mass, but in him who offered one sacrifice for sins for ever we find our all in all. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. You need not depart to pope, priest, church, or altar, for you may rest assured that there dwells in the man Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, all that your spiritual wants shall need for their supply, and on no occasion, for any wants that shall by possibility arise, need you go down into Egypt, or stay yourself on Assyria.

You will experience *great trials* as well as great wants. That young man fresh from the country has come to town to live in a godless family, and last night he was laughed at when he knelt down to pray. My young friend, you need not forsake the faith, for other saints have endured severer ordeals than yours and have still rejoiced in the Lord. Yours are only the trials of cruel mockings; *they* were stoned and sawn asunder, yet neither persecution, nakedness, nor sword, divided them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. Many also are those with whom providence deals severely; all God's waves and billows go

over them, through much tribulation they inherit the kingdom, and every thing in the future forebodes multiplied adversities, but yet they need not depart from Jesus their friend. If, like Paul, you should come to a place where two seas meet ; if you should experience a double trouble, and if neither sun nor moon should give you cheer. yet you need not suspend, but may rather deepen your fellowship with the Man of Sorrows. Christ is with you in the tempest-tossed vessel, and you and those who sail with you, shall yet come to the desired haven ; therefore be of good courage, and let not your hearts be troubled. The Son of God will be with you in the seven-times heated furnace. "When thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." This proves to a demonstration that you need not depart.

You will encounter *many difficulties* between here and heaven. Those who paint the road to glory in rose-color have never trodden it. Many are the hills and dales between this Jericho and the city of the Great King. Let who will be without trials, Christians will have their full share of them ; but there shall come no difficulty of any kind between here and paradise which shall necessitate the soul's going anywhere but to her gracious Lord, for guidance, for consolation, for strength, or for aught besides. Little know we of the walls to be leaped or the troops to be overcome, but we know full well that never need we part from the Captain of our salvation, or call in other helpers. Death will probably befall us, but we need nor depart from Jesus in the hour of our departure out of this world. On the contrary, when the death-dew lies cold on our brow we will sing, "If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now ;" "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Straight on into eternity, and on, and on for ever, that word "Depart" never need cross our path. As

never in eternity will the great Judge pronounce the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed," upon his saints, so never in his providence, nor in the severest trial, will he render it necessary that the saints should in any sense depart from him.

Never, O time, in thy darkest hour
 Shall I need depart from him,
 Though round me thy blackest tempests lower
 And both sun and moon grow dim.
 Faster and faster each grief shall bind
 My soul to her Lord above;
 And all the woes that assail my mind
 Shall drive me to rest in his love.

There is no necessity, then, in the present, and there will be none in the future, for departing from communion with the Lord.

III. Thirdly, "They need not depart;" that is to say, NO FORCE CAN COMPEL THE CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM JESUS.

The world can tempt us to depart, and alas! too successfully does it seduce with its fascinating blandishments. Its frowns alarm the cowardly, and its smiles delude the unwary, but none need depart. If we have grace enough to play the man, Madam Bubble cannot lead us astray. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." We need not be taken in the world's traps, there is one who can deliver us from the snares of the fowler. We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan and the temptations of the world; we are not *compelled* to fall from our steadfastness; and if we do so, it is our wilful fault. There is no necessity for it. Many live above the world—many in as difficult circumstances as ours. There are those in heaven who have found as hard hand-to-hand fighting in the spiritual life as we do; yet they were not vanquished, nor need we be; for the same strength which was given to them is reserved for us also. But saith one, "You do not know where I live."

Perhaps not. "You do not know what I have to endure," cries another. Most true; but I know where my Lord lived, and I have heard that he endured much contradiction of sinners against himself, but he did not depart from holiness, nor from love to you. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Perseverance to the end is possible to every believer nay, it is promised him, and he may have it for the seeking. You need not depart, young friend, the world cannot drag you from Jesus, though it may entice you. Yield not, and you shall stand; for there has no temptation happened to you but such as is common to men.

Satan is a very cunning tempter of the souls of men, but though he would fain constrain you to depart from your Lord, you need not follow his bidding. Satan is strong, but Christ is stronger. His temptations are insinuating, but you are no longer in darkness that you should be deceived by him. You need not depart. Even though surprising temptations should assault you at unawares, it ought not to find you sleeping. Has not Christ said, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch?" You will not be surprised, if holy anxiety stands sentinel to your soul. Prayer and watchfulness will warn you of the enemy's approach, and therefore you need not be driven to forsake your Lord.

Ay, but, perhaps, it may be that in addition to the world and to Satan, you are very conscious of the terrible *depravity of your own heart*, and, indeed, that is the chief ground of fear. The heart is deceitful, prone to wander, and ready enough to depart from the living God. But you need not depart from the Master because of that. The new-born nature takes up arms against the body of sin and death, the Holy Spirit also dwells within to conquer indwelling sin. Shall not the life which is from above subdue the natural death? Shall not the Spirit purge out the whole leaven? You need not depart from Jesus. It is true you have a fiery temper, but it must not prevail; there is a cure for that

plague. Perhaps we are inclined to levity, but we need not let our frivolous nature reign ; grace can overcome it, and will. Where sin abounded, grace doth yet more abound. There is no unconquerable sin ; there is no Dagon that shall not be broken in the presence of the ark of God, there is no temple of the Philistines which shall not fall beneath the might of our greater Samson. We need not, as the result of temperament, or because of any sin that doth so easily beset us, depart from Jesus, for grace is equal to all emergencies.

— Do you call to mind that there may be another force employed beside that of the world, or of Satan, or the corruption within, namely, the lamentable *coldness of the Christian church* ? Truly it is to be feared that more have departed from close walking with Christ through the chilliness of professors than from almost any other cause. New-born children of God too often feel the atmosphere of the church to be as freezing as that of an ice-well ; their holy warmth of zeal is frozen, and their limbs are stiffened into a rigor of inactivity, so that it is a marvel that they do not die—die they would were not the spiritual life immortal and eternal. But, brethren, even in the midst of the coldest church we need not depart from a near and elevated fellowship with the Lord. The church of Rome is a church defiled with error and debased with superstition, but was there ever a nobler Christian woman in this world than Madame de la Mothe Guyon ? She did not depart from Christ, though in the midst of a pestilent atmosphere. Remember, too, the names of Jansenius, and Arnold, and Pascal, and Fénelon, which are an honor to the universal church of Christ : who walked in closer communion with Jesus than those holy men ? In the midst of the darkest ages there have shone forth fairest stars. There are a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments. Often am I told by some brother in a country village, where the minister seems to have gone to sleep twenty years ago and has

never awakened since, that he finds it very hard to rejoice in the Lord, for his Sabbaths are a burden instead of a joy. My dear brother, you want more grace, if this is your case. You must have more vitality within if you see so much death without. You need not depart; on the contrary, by becoming an example of living near to Christ yourself, you may quicken others; for, thank God, grace is contagious as well as sin. At any rate, it is certain that though many influences may seduce us, no force can compel us to depart from Jesus.

No power in earth or hell
Can force me to depart;
Christ is my strength unconquerable,
He fortifies my heart.

Fixed in his love I stand,
And none shall drive me thence;
Enclosed I am within the hand
Of Love's omnipotence.

✓ IV. Regarded from another point, our text may teach us that THERE IS NO IMPOSSIBILITY IN KEEPING CLOSE TO THE BELOVED.

Many believers think that if they have fellowship every now and then with Jesus, with long intervals between, they are quite as much advanced as need be, and have probably reached as far as human nature is ever likely to go. An affectation of superfine godliness is suspicious, but, at the same time, a higher standard of religion can be maintained, and ought to be maintained than is commonly seen among professors at this time. We ought to attain to such a walk with God, to so calm and serene a frame, that the light which shines upon our pathway shall be constant and clear. Enoch walked with God for hundreds of years, and cannot a man walk with God for twenty years? Enoch lived in the dark age of the world comparatively; cannot we who live under the gospel continuously walk with God? Enoch begat sons

and daughters, and so had all the cares of a household, and yet he walked with God; cannot we, who have the like cares, yet still, by divine grace, be enabled to maintain unbroken communion? I know the place is high where they stand who consciously abide with Christ, but will you not strive to climb there and bathe your foreheads in the everlasting sunlight of Jehovah's face? I know it would require most jealous walking, but you serve a jealous God, and he demands holy jealousy from you. Oh, the joy of living in the embrace of Jesus, and never departing from it! Oh, the bliss of sitting always at his feet, abiding with the Bridegroom, and listening to his voice! Surely the gain is worth the exertion, and the prize is worthy of the struggle. Let us not, since the attainment is not impossible, murmur at the difficulty, but rather by faith let us ask that we may begin to-night to achieve the result and continue to achieve it, till we come to see the face of Christ in heaven. Others have done so; why should not we?

Brethren, the way to maintain fellowship with Christ is simple. If you desire to retain in your mouth all day the flavor of the wines on the lees well refined, take care that you drink deep by morning devotion. Do not waste those few moments which you allot to morning prayer. Lay a text on your tongue, and like a wafer made with honey, it shall sweeten your soul till nightfall. During the day, when you can do so, think about your Redeemer, his person, his work. Seek to him, pray to him, ask him to speak to you. All the day long, lean on the Beloved. During the day serve him, say, "Lord, how can I serve thee in my calling?" Consecrate the kitchen, consecrate the market-room; make every place holy, by glorifying the Lord there. Converse much with him, and it will not be impossible for you to abide in him from the year's beginning to its close. You need not depart. There is no mental or spiritual impossibility in the maintenance of unbroken communion, if the Holy Spirit be your helper.

'Tis not too high for grace,
Though nature fail to climb,
Rise till you always view his face
In fellowship sublime.

'Tis not too much for grace
To hold a life-long stay;
You need not leave the sacred place,
But rest therein for aye.

V. Once more. We need not depart; that is to say THERE IS NO REASON THAT CAN BE IMAGINED WHICH WOULD RENDER IT A WISE, AND PROPER, AND GOOD THING FOR A CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM CHRIST.

Suppose that the search after happiness be the great drift of our life, as the old philosophers assert, then we need not depart from Jesus to win it, for he is heaven below. You desire pleasure, forget not that the pleasures of God which are in Christ, his joy, the joy that fills his great heart, these are more than enough to fill *your* heart. I sometimes hear people say, as an excuse for professors going to doubtful places of amusement, "You know they must have some recreation." Yes, I know, but the *re-creation* which the Christian experienced when he was born again, has so completely made all things new to him, that the vile rubbish called recreation by the world is so vapid to him, that he might as well try to fill himself with fog as to satisfy his soul with such utter vanity. No; the Christian finds happiness in Christ Jesus, and when he wants pleasure, he does not depart from Jesus.

Perhaps it is said that we require a little excitement now and then, for excitement gives a little fillip to life, and is as useful to it as stirring is to a fire. I know it, and I trust you may have excitement, for the medicinal power of a measure of exhilaration and excitement is great, but you need not depart from Christ to get it, for there is such a thing as the soul's dancing at the sound of his name, while all the sanctified passions are lifted up in the ways of the

Lord. Holy mirth will sometimes so bubble up, and overflow in the soul, that the man will say, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth." Joy in Christ can rise to ecstasy and soar aloft to bliss. If you desire to wear the highest crown of joy, you need not depart from Christ.

But it is said, "We require food for our intellect ; a man needs to develop his intellectual faculties, he must needs learn that which will enlarge and expand his mind." Certainly, by all manner of means. But, O beloved brother, you need not depart from Christ to get this, for the science of Christ crucified is the most excellent, comprehensive and sublime of all the sciences. It is the only infallible science in the circle of knowledge. Moreover, by all true science you will find Christ honored, and not dishonored, and your learning, if it be true learning, will not make you depart from Christ, but lead you to see more of his creating and ruling wisdom.

The profoundest astronomer admires the Sun of Righteousness; the best-taught geologist has no quarrel with the Rock of Ages; the greatest adept in mathematics marvels at him who is the sum total of the universe; he who knows the most of the physical, if he knows aright, loves the spiritual and reverences God in Christ Jesus. To imagine that to be wise one needs forsake the Incarnate Wisdom, is insanity. No, to reach the highest degree of attainment in true learning, there is no reason for departing from Christ.

"We must have friends and acquaintances," says one. You need not depart from Christ to get them. We admit that a young woman does well to enter the marriage state; a young man is safer and better for having a wife; but my dear young friends, you need not break Christ's law, and depart from him in order to find a good husband or a good wife. His rule is that you should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; it is a wise and

kind rule, and is an assistance rather than a hinderance to a fit marriage. "But," says one, "I do not intend to depart from Christ, though I am about to marry an unconverted person." Rest assured that you are departing from Jesus by that act. I have never yet met with a single case in which marriages of this kind have been blessed of God. I know what young women say, "Do not be too severe, sir, I shall bring him round." You will certainly fail. You are sinning in marrying under that idea. If you break Christ's law, you cannot expect Christ's blessing. To be happy in future life with a suitable partner you need not depart from Jesus. There is nothing in life you can want that is truly desirable, nothing that can promote your welfare, nothing that is really good for you, that can ever make it necessary for you to depart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, if this be true, do not some of us feel very guilty? I could weep to think that I have so often departed from close fellowship with my Lord and Master, when I need not have done it. I am cast down and weary and cumbered with much serving occasionally. I know my faith is in Christ; but I have not the calm unstaggering faith I desire to have. But I know that with a thousand cares (and I have ten thousand), I need not for a moment lose serenity and peace of mind, if I can reach the place which by God's grace I will reach yet. Do you not feel ashamed that your family troubles, and perhaps your family joys, have taken you off from your Saviour? Some of you have a great deal of leisure, and yet you slide away from Christ. Let us be ashamed together; but let us remember that if we have departed from Christ and the enjoyment of his fellowship, we can offer no excuse by saying we could not help it while this verse stands true. We do it wilfully, we do it sinfully. It is not to be thrust on the back of circumstances; it cannot be laid on the devil, nor blamed to this, nor blamed to that, it is our own fault. We need not depart; there never was any need for it, and there never will be. May God's grace

descend mightily upon us, so that we may henceforth abide in our Lord. May those who know him not be led to seek him by faith ever now and find him, and then even they shall not need to depart from him at the last. *E. C. C.*

SERMON IV.

THE SIN OF GADDING ABOUT.

This discourse is a natural sequel to Number IV.

* WHY GADDEST THOU ABOUT SO MUCH TO CHANGE THY WAY? "—Jeremiah ii. 36

God's ancient people were very prone to forget him, and to worship the false deities of the neighboring heathen. Other nations were faithful to their blocks of wood and of stone, and adhered as closely to their graven images as though they really had helped them, or could in future deliver them. Only the nation which avowed the true God forsook its God, and left the fountain of living waters to hew out for itself broken cisterns which could hold no water. There seems to have been, speaking after the manner of men, astonishment in the divine mind concerning this, for the Lord says, "Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate." In this same chapter the Lord addresses his people with the question, "Can a maid forget her ornaments? or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number." And here, in this text, the same astonishment appears, "Why gaddest thou about so much to change

thy way?" It most certainly was a most unreasonable thing that a people with such a God, who had dealt out to them so graciously the riches of his love, and had wrought such wonders on their behalf, should turn from him to the worship of Baal or Ashtaroth, mimic gods which had ears but heard not, eyes but saw not, and did but mock the worshippers who were deluded by them.

As in a glass I see myself in these people. The spiritual people of God are well imaged in the typical nation; for, alas! waywardness and wandering of heart are the diseases not only of the Israelites of old, but also of the true Israel now. The same expostulations may be addressed to us as to that erring nation of old, for we as perpetually backslide, and as constantly forget the Almighty One, to put our trust in an arm of flesh. He saith to us also, "Why gaddest thou about so much?" For we are, alas! too often false to him, forgetting him, and wandering hither and thither, rather than abiding in close and constant fellowship with God our exceeding joy.

I desire to put this question to believers, and then to the unconverted. May the Holy Spirit bless it to each class.

If you read this question, taking it in its connection, you will see in the first place, that there is *a relationship mentioned*. The question is asked, "Why gaddest thou about so much?" The inquiry is not made of a traveller, nor of one whose business it is to journey from pole to pole, and to investigate distant lands. It is not asked of a wayfarer lodging for a night, nor of a homeless vagrant who finds a poor shelter beneath every bush; but it is asked by God of his people Israel, describing them under the character of a married wife. He represents the nation of Israel as being married unto himself, himself the husband of Israel, and Israel his bride. To persons bearing that character the question comes with great force, "Why gaddest thou about so much?" Let others wander who have no central object of attraction, who have no house, and no "house-band," to

bind them to the spot ; but thou, a married wife, how canst thou wander ? What hast thou to do in traversing strange ways ? How canst thou excuse thyself ? If thou wert not false to thy relationship thou couldst not do so ? No, beloved, we strain no metaphor when we say that there exists between the soul of every believer and Jesus Christ, a relationship admirably imaged in the conjugal tie. We are married unto Christ. He has betrothed our souls unto himself. He paid our dowry on the cross. He espoused himself unto us in righteousness, in the covenant of grace. We have accepted him as our Lord and husband. We have given ourselves up to him, and under the sweet law of his love we ought to dwell evermore in his house. He is the bridegroom of our souls, and he has arrayed us in the wedding dress of his own righteousness. Now it is to us who own this marriage union, and who are allied to the Lord Jesus by ties so tender, that the Well Beloved says, "Why gaddest thou about so much ?"

Observe, that the wife's place may be described as a threefold one. In the first place, *she should abide in dependence upon her husband's care.* It would be looked upon as a very strange thing if a wife should be overheard to speak to another man, and say, "Come and assist in providing for me." If she should cross the street to another's house and say to a stranger, "I have a difficulty and a trouble ; will you relieve me from it ? I feel myself in great need, but I shall not ask my husband to help me, though he is rich enough to give me any thing I require, and wise enough to direct me, but I come to you a stranger, in whom I have no right to confide, and from whom I have no right to look for love, and I trust myself with you, and confide in you rather than in my husband." This would be a very wicked violation of the chastity of the wife's heart : her dependence as a married woman with a worthy husband, must be solely fixed on him to whom she is bound in wedlock. Transfer the figure, for it is even so with us and the Lord Jesus. It is a

tender topic; let it tenderly touch your heart and mine. What right have I, when I am in trouble, to seek an arm of flesh to lean upon, or to pour my grief into an earth-born ear in preference to casting my care on God, and telling Jesus all my sorrows? If a human friend had the best intentions, yet he is not like my Lord, he never died for me, he never shed his blood for me, and if he loves me he cannot love me as the husband of my soul can love! My Lord's love is ancient as eternity, deeper than the sea, firmer than the hills, changeless as his own Deity; how can I seek another friend in preference to him? What a slight I put upon the affection of my Saviour! What a slur upon his condescending sympathy towards me! How I impugn his generosity and mistrust his power if, in my hour of need, I cry out, "Alas! I have no friend." No friend while Jesus lives! Dare I say I have no helper? No helper while the Mighty One upon whom God has laid help still exists with arm unparalyzed and heart unchanged? Can I murmur and lament that there is no escape for me from my tribulations? No escape while my Almighty Saviour lives, and feels my every grief? Do you see my point? Put it in that shape, and the question, "Why gaddest thou about so much to look after creatures as grounds of dependence!" becomes a very deep and searching one. Why, O believer, dost thou look after things which are seen, and heard, and handled, and recognized by the sense, instead of trusting in thine unseen but not unknown Redeemer? Oh! why, why, thou spouse of the Lord Jesus, why gaddest thou about so much? Have we not even fallen into this evil with regard to our own salvation? After a time of enjoyment it sometimes happens that our graces decline, and we lose our spiritual enjoyment, and as we are very apt to depend upon our own experience, our faith also droops. Is not this unfaithfulness to the finished work and perfect merit of our great Substitute? We knew at the first, when we were under conviction of sin, that we could not rest on any thing

within ourselves, and yet that truth is always slipping away from our memories, and we try to build upon past experiences, or to rely upon present enjoyments, or some form or other of personal attainment. Do we really wish to exchange the sure rock of our salvation for the unstable sand of our own feelings? Can it be that having once walked by faith we now choose to walk by sight? Are graces, and frames, and enjoyments, to be preferred to the tried foundation of the Redeemer's atonement? Be it remembered that even the work of the Holy Spirit, if it be depended upon as a ground of acceptance with God, becomes as much an anti-christ as though it were not the work of the Holy Spirit at all. Dare we so blaspheme the Holy Ghost as to make his work in us a rival to the Saviour's work for us? Shame on us that we should thus doubly sin! The best things are mischievous when put in the wrong place. Good works have "necessary uses," but they must not be joined to the work of Christ as the groundwork of our hope. Even precious gold may be made into an idol-calf, and that which the Lord himself bestows may be made to be a polluted thing, like that brazen serpent which once availed to heal, but when it was idolized came to be styled by no better name than "a piece of brass," and was broken and put away. Do not continually harp upon what thou art, and what thou art not; thy salvation does not rest in these things, but in thy Lord. Go thou and stand at the foot of the cross, still **an empty-handed sinner** to be filled with the riches of Christ; a sinner black as the tents of Kedar in thyself, and comely only through thy Lord.

Again, the wife's position is not only one of sole dependence upon her husband's care, but it should be, and is, *a position of sole delight in her husband's love*. To be suspected of desiring aught of man's affection beyond that, would be the most serious imputation that could be cast upon a wife's character. We are again upon very tender ground, and I beseech each of you who are now thinking of

your Lord, consider yourself to be on very tender ground too, for you know what our God has said—"The Lord thy God is a jealous God." That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—"a jealous God." See that it be engraven on your hearts. Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love him should divide our hearts between him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy cruel as the grave, "the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." The royal word to the spouse is, "Forge also thine own kindred, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." Of course, beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give, and which it is a part of our sanctification to give in its due and proper proportion to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints, and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is for the Master alone. Inside the heart there must be a *sanctum sanctorum*, within the veil, where he himself alone must shine like the Shechinah, and reign on the mercy-seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits, where the true Solomon alone must sit; the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must he, the King in his beauty, sit enthroned, sole monarch of the heart's affections. But, alas! alas! how often have we gone far to provoke his anger! We have set up the altars of strange gods hard by the holy place. Sometimes a favorite child has been idolized; another time, perhaps our own persons have been admired and pampered. We have been unwilling to suffer though we knew it to be the Lord's will: we were determined to make provision for the flesh. We have not been willing to hazard our substance for Christ, thus making our worldly comfort our chief delight, instead of feeling that wealth to be well lost which is lost as the result of Jehovah's will. Oh, how soon we make idols! Idol-mak-

ing was not only the trade of Ephesus, but it is a trade all the world over. Making shrines for Diana, nay, shrines for self, we are all master craftsmen at this in some form or another. Images of jealousy, which become abominations of desolation, we have set up. We may even exalt some good pursuit into an idol, even work for the Master may sometimes take *his* place ; as was the case with Martha, we are cumbered with much serving, and often think more about the serving than of *him* who is to be served ; the secret being, that we are too mindful of how *we* may look in the serving, and not enough considerate of *him*, and of how *he* may be honored by our service. It is so very easy for our busy spirits to gad about, and so very difficult to sit at the Master's feet. Now, Christian, if thou hast been looking after this and after that secondary matter ; if thy mind has been set too much upon worldly business, or upon any form of earthly love, the Master says to thee, "My spouse, my beloved, why gaddest thou about so much?" Let us confess our fault, and return unto our rest. Let each one sing plaintively in the chamber of his heart some such song as this—

"Why should my foolish passions rove?

Where can such sweetness be

As I have tasted in thy love,

As I have found in thee?

Wretch that I am, to wander thus

In chase of false delight :

Let me be fasten'd to thy cross,

Rather than lose thy sight."

But a third position, which I think will be recognized by every wife as being correct, is not simply dependence upon her husband's care and delight in her husband's love, but also *diligence in her husband's house*. The good housewife, as Solomon tells us, "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness." She is not a servant, her position is very different from that, but

for that very reason she uses the more diligence. A servant's work may sometimes be finished, but a wife's never. "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." She rejoices willingly to labor as no servant could be expected to do. "She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands." "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." All through the live-long night she watches her sick child, and then through the weary day as well the child is still tended, and the household cares are still heavy upon her. She relaxes never. She counts that her house is her kingdom, and she cares for it with incessant care. The making of her husband happy, and the training up of her children in the fear of God, that is her business. The good housewife is like Sarah, of whom it is written, that when the angels asked Abraham, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" he answered, "Behold she is in the tent." It would have been well for some of her descendants had they been "in the tent," too, for Dinah's going forth to see the daughters of the land cost her dear. Now, this is the position, the exact position of the chaste lover of Jesus, he dwells at home with Jesus, among his own people. The Christian's place with regard to Christ is to be diligently engaged in Christ's house. Some of us can say, I trust, that we do naturally care for the souls of men. We were born by God's grace, to care for them, and could not be happy, any more than some nurses can be happy without the care of children, unless we have converts to look after, and weaklings to cherish. It is well for the church when there are many of her members, beside her pastors and deacons, who care for the souls of those who are born in the church. The church is Christ's family mansion. It should be the home of new-born souls, where they are fed with food convenient for them,

nourished, comforted, and educated for the better land. You have all something to do; you who are married to Christ have all a part assigned you in the household of God. He has given you each a happy task. It may be that you have to suffer in secret for him, or you have to talk to two or three, or perhaps in a little village station, or at the corner of a street you have to preach, or possibly it is the distribution of a handful of tracts, or it is looking after the souls of a few women in your district, or teaching a class of children. Whatever it is, if we have been growing at all negligent, if we have not thrown our full strength into his work, and have been expending our vigor somewhere else, may not the question come very pertinently home to us, "Why gaddest thou about so much?" Why that party of pleasure, that political meeting, that late rising, that waste of time? Hast thou nothing better to do? Thou hast enough to do for thy husband and his church, if thou doest it well. Thou hast not a minute to spare, the King's business requireth haste. Our charge is too weighty and too dear to our hearts to admit of sloth. The Lord has given us as much to do as we shall have strength and time to accomplish by his grace, and we have no energies to spare, no talents to wrap up in napkins, no hours to idle in the market-place. One thing we do: that one thing should absorb all our powers. To neglect our holy life-work is to wrong our heavenly Bridegroom. Put this matter in a clear light, my brethren, and do not shut your eyes to it. Have you any right to mind earthly things? Can you serve two masters? What, think you, would any kind husband here think, if when he came home the children had been neglected all day, if there was no meal for him after his day's work, and no care taken of his house whatever? Might he not well give a gentle rebuke, or turn away with a tear in his eye? And if it were long continued, might he not almost be justified if he should say—"My house yields me no comfort! This woman acts not as a wife to me!"

And yet, bethink thee, soul, is not this what thou hast done with thy Lord? When he has come into his house has he not found it in sad disorder, the morning prayer neglected, the evening supplication but poorly offered, those little children but badly taught, and many other works of love forgotten. It is thy business as well as his, for thou art **one** with him, and yet thou hast failed in it. Might he not justly say to thee, "I have little comfort in thy fellowship? I will get me gone until thou treatest me better, and when thou longest for me, and art willing to treat me as I should be treated, then I will return to thee, but thou shalt see my face no more till thou hast a truer heart towards me?" Thus in personal sadness have I put this question; the Lord give us tender hearts while answering it.

Painful as the inquiry is, let us turn to the question again. A reason is requested: what shall we give? "Why gaddest thou about so much?" I am at a loss to give any answer. I can suppose that without beating about the bush, an honest heart convinced of its ingratitude to Christ would say, "My Lord, all I can say for myself is to make a confession of the wrong, and if I might make any excuse, which after all is no excuse, it is this, I find myself so fickle at heart, so frail, so changeable; I am like Reuben, unstable as water, and therefore I do not excel." But I can well conceive that the Master, without being severe, would not allow even of such an extenuation as that, because there are many of us who could not fairly urge it. We are not fickle in other things. We are not unstable in minor matters. Where we love we love most firmly, and a resolve once taken by us is determinedly carried out. We know what it is, some of us, to put our foot down, and declare that having taking a right step we will not retrace it; and then no mortal power can move us. Now, if we possess this resolute character in other things, it can never be allowable for us to use the excuse of instability. Resolved elsewhere, how canst thou be fickle here? Firm everywhere else, and

yet frail here ! O soul, what art thou at ? This is gratuitous sin, wanton fickleness. Surely thou hast wrought folly in Israel if thou givest the world thy best, and Christ thy worst ! The world thy decision, and Christ thy wavering ! This is but to make thy sin the worse. The excuse becomes an aggravation. It is not true that thou art thus unavoidably fickle. Thou art not a feather blown with every wind, but a man of purpose and will ; oh, why then so soon removed from thy best Beloved One ?

I will ask thee a few questions, not so much by way of answering the inquiry, as to show how difficult it is to answer it. "Why gaddest thou about so much ?" Has thy Lord given thee any offence ? Has he been unkind to thee ? Has the Lord Jesus spoken to thee like a tyrant, and played the despot over thee ? Must thou not confess that in all his dealings with thee in the past, love, unmingled love, has been his rule ? He has borne patiently with thine ill-manners ; when thou hast been foolish he has given thee wisdom, and he has not upbraided thee, though he might have availed himself of the opportunity of that gift, as men so often do, to give a word of upbraiding at the same time. He has not turned against thee or been thine enemy, why then be so cold to him ? Is this the way to deal with one so tender and so good ? Let me ask thee, has thy Saviour changed ? Wilt thou dare to think he is untrue to thee ? Is he not "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever ?" That cannot, then, be an apology for thine unfaithfulness. Has he been unmindful of his promise ? He has told thee to call upon him in the day of trouble, and he will deliver thee ; has he failed to do so ? It is written, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Has he withheld a really good thing from thee when thou hast walked uprightly ? If, indeed, he had played thee false, thine excuse for deserting him might claim a hearing, but thou darest not say this. Thou knowest that he is faithful and true.

“Why gaddest thou about so much?” Hast thou found any happiness in gadding about? I confess, sorrowfully, to wandering often and wandering much, but I am ready enough to acknowledge that I get no peace, no comfort by my wanderings, but like a forlorn spirit I traverse dry places, seeking rest and finding none. If for a day, or a part of a day, my thoughts are not upon my Lord, the hour is dreary, and my time hangs heavily; and if my thought is spent upon other topics even connected with my work in the church of God, if I do not soon come back to him, if I have no dealings with him in prayer and praise, I find the wheels of my chariot taken off, and I drag along right heavily.

“The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblest with thoughts of thee,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme thou be.”

The soul that has once learned to swim in the river of Christ will, when his presence is withdrawn, be like a fish laid by the fisherman on the sandy shore, it begins to palpitate in dire distress, and ere long it will die, if not again restored to its vital element. You cannot get the flavor of the bread of heaven in your mouth, and afterwards contentedly feed on ashes. He who has never tasted any thing but the brown, gritty cakes of this world, may be very well satisfied with them; but he who has once tasted the pure white bread of heaven can never be content with the old diet. It spoils a man for satisfaction with this world to have had heart-ravishing dealings with the world to come. I mean not that it spoils him for practical activity in it, for the heavenly life is the truest life even for earth, but it spoils him for the sinful pleasures of this world; it prevents his feeding his soul upon any thing save the Lord Jesus Christ's sweet love. Jesus is the chief ingredient of all his joy, and he finds that no other enjoyment beneath the sky is worth a moment's comparison with the King's wines on

the lees, well refined. "Why then gaddest thou about so much?" For what, oh! for what reason dost thou wander? When a child runs away from its home, because it has a brutal parent, it is excused; but when the child leaves a tender mother and an affectionate father, what shall we say? If the sheep quits a barren field to seek after needed pasturage, who shall blame it? But if it leaves the green pastures, and forsakes the still waters to roam over the arid sand, or to go bleating in the forest among the wolves, in the midst of danger, how foolish a creature it proves itself! Such has been our folly. We have left gold for dross! We have forsaken a throne for a dunghill? We have quitted scarlet and fine linen for rags and beggary! We have left a palace for a hovel! We have turned from sunlight into darkness! We have forsaken the shining of the Sun of Righteousness, the sweet summer weather of communion, the singing of the birds of promise, and the turtle voice of the divine Spirit, and the blossoming of the roses and the fair lilies of divine love, to shiver in frozen regions among the ice caves and snow of absence from the Lord's presence. God forgive us, for we have no excuse for this folly.

"Why gaddest thou about so much?" Hast thou not always had to pay for thy gaddings, aforetime! O pilgrim, it is hard getting back again to the right road. Every believer knows how wise John Bunyan was when he depicted Christian as bemoaning himself bitterly when he had to go back to the harbor where he had slept and lost his roll. He had to do a triple journey; first to go on, and then to go back, and then to go on again. The back step is weary marching. Remember, also, Bypath Meadow, and Doubting Castle, and Giant Despair. 'Twas an ill day when the pilgrims left the narrow way. No gain, but untold loss comes of forsaking the way of holiness and fellowship. What is there in such a prospect to attract you from the happy way of communion with Christ. Perhaps the

last time you wandered, you fell into sin, or you met with a grief which overwhelmed you : ought not these mishaps to teach you ? Being burned will you not dread the fire ? Having aforetime been assaulted when in forbidden paths, will you not now keep to the king's highway, wherein no lion or any other ravenous beast shall be found ?

“Why gaddest thou about so much ?” Dost thou not even now feel the drawings of his love attracting thee to himself ? This heavenly impulse should make the question altogether unanswerable. You feel sometimes a holy impulse to pray, and yet do not pray ; you feel, even now, as if you wished to behold the face of your Beloved, and yet you will go forth into the world without him ; is this as it should be ? The Holy Spirit is saying in your soul, “Arise from the bed of thy sloth, and seek him whom thy soul loveth.” If your sloth prevents your rising how will you excuse yourself ? Even now I hear the Beloved knocking at your door. Will you not hasten to admit him ? Are you too idle ? Dare you say to him, “I have put off my coat, how can I put it on ? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them ?” If you keep him without in the cold and darkness while his head is wet with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, what cruelty is this ? Is this thy kindness to thy friend ? Can you hear him say, “Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled ;” and can you be deaf to his appeals ? Oh that he may gently make for himself an entrance. May he put in his hand by the hole of the door, and may your bowels be moved for him ! May you rise up and open to him, and then your hands will drop with myrrh, and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. But remember if you neglect him now, it will cost you much to find him when you do arise, for he will make you traverse the streets after him, and the watchmen will smite you, and take away your veil. Rise and admit him now.

"Behold! your Bridegroom's at the door!
 He gently knocks, has knock'd before:
 Has waited long; is waiting still:
 You treat no other friend so ill.

Oh lovely attitude! he stands
 With melting heart and laden hands;
 Delay no more, lest he depart,
 Admit him to your inmost heart."

Yet again, even now, he calls you. Run after him, for he draws you. Approach him, for he invites you. God grant it may be so!

I wish I had the power to handle a topic like this as Rutherford, or Herbert, or Hawker would have done, so as to touch all your hearts, if you are at this hour without enjoyment of fellowship with Jesus. But, indeed, I am so much one of yourselves, so much one who has to seek the Master's face myself, that I can scarcely press the question upon you, but must rather press it upon myself. "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?" Blessed shall be the time when our wanderings shall cease, when we shall see him face to face, and rest in his bosom! Till then, if we are to know any thing of heaven here below, it must be by living close to Jesus, abiding at the foot of his cross, depending on his atonement, looking for his coming—that glorious hope, preparing to meet him with lamps well trimmed, watching for the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;" standing even in his presence; looking up to him as we see him pleading before the throne, and believing that he is ever with us, even unto the end of the world. Oh may we be in future so fixed in heart that the question need not again be asked of us, "Why gaddest thou about so much?"

And now I have to use the text for a few minutes, in addressing those who are not converted.

I trust that some of you who are not yet saved, nevertheless have a degree of desire towards Christ. It is well when like the climbing plant, the heart throws out tendrils, try

ing to grasp something by the help of which it may mount higher. I hope that desire of yours after better things, and after Jesus, is something more than nature could have imparted. Grace is the source of gracious desires. But that is not the point. Your desires may be right, and yet your methods of action mistaken. You have been trying after peace, but you have been gadding about to find it. The context says that the Israelites would soon be as weary of Egypt as they had been of Assyria. Read the whole passage: "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them." Jeremiah ii. 36, 37. Their gadding about would end in their being confounded at last as they were at first. Once they trusted in Assyria, and the Assyrians carried them away captive; that was the end of their former false confidence. Then they trusted in Egypt, and met with equal disappointment. When a man is at first alarmed about his soul, he will do any thing rather than come to Christ. Christ is a harbor that no ship ever enters except under stress of weather. Mariners on the sea of life steer for any port except the fair haven of free grace. When a man first finds comfort in his own good works, he thinks he has done well. "Why," says he, "this must be the way of salvation; I am not a drunkard now, I have taken the pledge; I am not a Sabbath-breaker now, I have taken a seat at a place of worship. Go in, and look at my house, sir; you will see it as different as possible from what it was before; there is a moral change in me of a most wonderful kind, and surely this will suffice!" Now, if God be dealing with that man in a way of grace, he will soon be ashamed of his false confidence. He will be thankful, of course, that he has been led to morality, but he will find that bed too short to stretch himself on it. He will discover that the past still lives;

that his old sins are buried only in imagination—the ghosts of them will haunt him, they will alarm his conscience. He will be compelled to feel that sin is a scarlet stain, not to be so readily washed out as he fondly dreamed. His self-righteous refuge will prove to be a bowing wall and a tottering fence. Driven to extremities by the fall of his tower of Babel, the top of which was to reach to heaven, he grows weary of his former hopes. He finds that all the outward religion he can muster will not suffice, that even the purest morality is not enough; for over and above the thunderings of conscience there comes clear and shrill as the voice of a trumpet, “Ye must be born again;” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye can in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Well, then, what does he do? He resolves to find another shelter, to exchange Assyria for Egypt. That is to say, as work will not do, he will try feeling; and the poor soul will labor to pump up repentance out of a rocky heart, and, failing to do so, will mistake despair for contrition. He will try as much as possible to feel legal convictions. He will sit down and read the books of Job and Jeremiah, till he half hopes that by becoming a companion of dragons, and an associate of owls, he may find rest. He seeks the living among the dead, comfort from the law, healing from a sword. He conceives that if he can feel up to a certain point, he can be saved; if he can repent to a certain degree, if he can be alarmed with fears of hell up to fever heat, then he may be saved. But ere long, if God is dealing with him, he gets to be as much ashamed of his feelings as of his works. He is thankful for them as far as they are good, but he feels that he could not depend upon them, and he recollects, that if feeling were the way of salvation he deserves to feel hell itself, and that to feel any thing short of eternal wrath would not meet the law’s demands. The question may fitly be put to one who thus goes the round of works, and feelings, and

perhaps of ceremonies, and mortifications, "Why gaddest thou about so much?" It will all end in nothing. You may gad about as long as you will, but you will never gain peace, except by simple faith in Jesus. All the while you are roaming so far, the gospel is nigh you, where you now are, in your present state, available to you in your present condition now, for "now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." O sinner, thou art thinking to bring something to the Most High God, and yet he bids thee come without money and without price. Thy Father saith to thee, "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He declares to you the way of salvation. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He calls to you in his gracious word, and says, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." He bids you trust in his Son, who is the appointed Saviour, for he hath laid help upon one that is mighty. He thus addresses you: "Incline your ear unto me, and come unto me: hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." You want pardon, and he cries from the cross, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." You want justification; the Father points you to his Son, and says, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." You want salvation; he directs you to him who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. The God of heaven bids you look to his dear Son, and trust him. Though I preach this gospel every day of the week, scarcely a day passes without my telling the old, old story, yet it is ever new. If you who hear me so often grow weary of it, it is the fault of my style of putting it, for to myself it seems fresher every day! To think that the tender Father should say to the prodigal son, "I ask nothing of thee; I am willing to receive thee, sinful, guilty, vile as thou art; though

thou hast injured me, and spent my substance with harlots ; though thou hast fed swine ; though thou art fit to be nothing but a swine-feeder all thy days ; yet come thou as thou art to my loving bosom ; I will rejoice over thee, and kiss thee, and say, ‘ Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his hands, and shoes on his feet ! ’ ” Sinner, God grant thee grace to end all thy roamings in thy Father’s bosom. “ Why gaddest thou about so much ? ” Renounce all other hopes and fly away to the wounds of Jesus. “ Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way ? ” Listen and obey these closing lines :—

“ Weary souls who wander wide
From the central point of bliss,
Turn to Jesus crucified,
Fly to those dear wounds of his :
Sink into the purple flood,
Rise into the life of God.

Find in Christ, the way of peace,
Peace, unspeakable, unknown ;
By his pain he gives you ease,
Life by his expiring groan :
Rise, exalted by his fall ;
Find in Christ your all in all.”

SERMON V.

THE BROAD WALL.

The six sermons numbered from V. to XI. are more brief than others, and were mainly delivered on week evening occasions. They were not published in our usual weekly series in England, and will therefore, we trust, be new to our American friends.

“THE BROAD WALL.” Nehemiah iii. 8.

It seems that round Jerusalem of old, in the time of her splendor, there was a broad wall, which was her defence and her glory. Jerusalem is a type of the Church of God. It is always well when we can see clearly, distinctly, and plainly, that around the Church to which we belong there runs a broad wall.

Without further preface, the idea of a broad wall around the Church suggests three things: *separation, security, and enjoyment.* Let us take each in its turn.

I. First, the SEPARATION of the people of God from the world is like that broad wall which surrounded the holy city of Jerusalem.

When a man becomes a Christian he is still in the world, but he is no longer to be of it. He was an heir of wrath, but he has now become a child of grace. Being of a distinct nature, he is required to separate himself from the rest of mankind, as the Lord Jesus Christ did, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” The Lord’s Church was separated in his eternal purpose. It was separated in his covenant and decree. It was separated in the

atonement, for even there we find that our Lord is called "the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." An actual separation is made by converting grace, is carried on in sanctification, and will be completed in that day when the heavens shall be on fire, and the saints shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air—then shall he divide the nations as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and then a great gulf shall be fixed, across which the ungodly cannot go to the righteous, neither shall the righteous approach the wicked.

My business in this address is to say to those of you who profess to be the Lord's people, *take care that you maintain a broad wall of separation between you and the world.* I do not say that you are to adopt peculiarities of dress, or practise singularities of speech. Such affectation gendereth, sooner or later, to hypocrisy. A man may be as thoroughly worldly in one coat as another, he may be quite as vain and conceited with one style of speech as another; nay, he may be even more of the world when he pretends to be separate, than if he had left the pretence of separation alone. The separation which we plead for is moral and spiritual. Its foundation is laid deep in the heart, and its substantial reality is very palpable in the life.

Every Christian, it seems to me, should be more scrupulous than other men *in his dealings.* He must never swerve from the path of integrity. He should never say, "It is the custom: it is perfectly understood in the trade." Let the Christian remember that custom cannot sanction wrong, and that its being "understood" is no apology for misrepresentation. A lie "understood" is not therefore true. While the golden rule is more admired than practised by ordinary men, the Christian should always do unto others what he would that they should do unto him. He should be one whose word is his bond, and who, having once pledged himself, sweareth to his own hurt, but changeth not. The Christian should be more precise even than the best moralists.

The highest point to which the best unconverted man can go should be looked upon as a level below which the converted man will never venture to descend.

Moreover, the Christian should especially be distinguished by his pleasures, for it is here, usually, that the true man comes out. We are not quite ourselves, perhaps, in our daily toil, where our pursuits are rather dictated by necessity than by choice. We are not alone; the society we are thrown into imposes restraints upon us; we have to put the bit and bridle upon ourselves. The true man does not then show himself; but when the day's work is done, then the "birds of a feather flock together." It is with the multitude of traders and commercial men as it was with those saints of old: of whom, when they were liberated from prison, it was said, "Being let go, they went unto their own company." So will your pleasures and pastimes give evidence of what your heart is, and where it is. If you can find pleasure in sin, then in sin you live, and, unless grace prevent, in sin you will perish. But if your pleasures are of a nobler kind, and your companions of a devoter character; if you seek spiritual enjoyments, if you get your happiest moments in worship, in communion, in silent prayer, or in the public assembling of yourselves with the people of God, then shall you be distinguished in your pleasure by a broad wall which effectually separates you from the world.

And this should be carried, I think, *into every thing which effects the Christian*. "What have they seen in thy house?" was the question asked of Hezekiah. When a stranger comes into our house it should be so ordered that he can clearly perceive that the Lord is there. A man ought scarcely to tarry a night beneath our roof without gathering that we have a respect unto him that is invisible, and that we desire to live and move in the light of God's countenance. I have already said that I would have you cultivate no singularities for singularity's sake; but still, the most of men are satisfied if they do as other people do; and you must

never be satisfied until you do more and do better than other people, and have found out a mode and course of life as much superior to the ordinary worlding's life, as the path of the eagle in the air is above that of the mole which burrows under the soil.

This broad wall between the godly and the ungodly, *should be most conspicuous in the spirit of our mind.* The ungodly man has only this world to live for; do not wonder if he lives very earnestly for it. He has no other treasure; why should he not get as much as he can of this? But you, Christian, profess to have an immortal life, and therefore your treasure lies not in this brief span of existence. Your inheritance is in eternity. Your best hopes overleap the narrow bounds of time, and fly beyond the grave, and your spirit must not, therefore, be earth-bound and grovelling, but soaring and heavenly. There should be about you always the air of one who has his shoes on his feet, his loins girded, and his staff in his hand—ready to leave Egypt for Canaan. Heavenward! Ho! is our motto. Away, away, away to the better land. You are not to live here as if this were all to you. You are not to talk of this world as though it were to last forever. You are not to hoard it up, as though you had set your heart upon it, but you are to be on the wing as though you had not a nest here, and never could have, but expected to find your resting-place amongst the cedars of God in the hill-tops of glory.

Depend upon it, the more a Christian is unlike an unconverted man, the better it is for him. I think I can show you several reasons why this wall should be very broad. *If you are sincere in your profession, there actually is a very broad distinction between you and unconverted people.* Can you measure the difference between life and death? They are as opposite as the poles. Now, according to your profession you have received a new life, whereas the children of this world are dead in trespasses and sins. How palpable the difference between light and darkness! Yet, you profess to

have been "sometimes darkness," but now are made light in the Lord. There is, therefore, a great distinction between you and the world if you be what you profess to be. You say when you put on the name of Christ, that you are journeying to the Celestial City, to the New Jerusalem; but the world turns its face upon God, and goes downward to destruction; your paths are different. If you be what you say you are, your way of life must be diametrically opposite to that of the ungodly man. You know the difference between their ends. The end of the righteous shall be glory everlasting, but the end of the wicked is eternal destruction. Now, unless you are a hypocrite, there is such a difference between you and others as only God himself could make—a distinction which will exist throughout eternity, and, when the distinction of riches and poverty, ignorance and learning, shall all have passed away, the distinction between the living and the dead, between the chosen and the castaway shall be as clear as ever. I pray you, then, make a broad wall in your conduct, as God has made a broad wall in your state and in your destiny.

Remember, again, that *our Lord Jesus Christ had a broad wall between him and the ungodly*. Look at him and see how different he is from the men of his time. All his life long you observe him to be a stranger and a foreigner in the land. Truly, he drew near to sinners, as near as he could draw, and he received them when they were willing to draw near to him; but he did not draw near to their sins. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." When he went to his own city of Nazareth, he only preached a single sermon, and they would have cast him headlong down the hill if they could. When he passed through the street, he became the song of the drunkard, and the wicked spake against him. At last, having come to his own, and his own having thus received him not, they determined to thrust him altogether out of the camp, and they took him to Golgotha, and nailed him to the tree there.

He was the despised Dissenter, the great Nonconformist of his age. The National Church first excommunicate him, and then crucified him. He did not seek difference in things trivial; but the purity of his life and the truthfulness of his testimony, roused the spleen of the rulers and chief men of their synagogues. He seemed in all things to wish to serve them and to bless them, but he never would blend with them. They would have made him a king. Ah! if he would but have joined the world, the world would have given him the chief place, as the world's master said on the mountain: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But he drove away the fiend, and stood immaculate and separate even to the close of his life. If you are a Christian, be a Christian. If you follow Christ, go without the camp. But if there be no difference between you and your fellow-men, what will you say unto the King in the day when he cometh and findeth that you have on no wedding garment by which you can be distinguished from the rest of mankind? Because Christ made a broad wall around himself, there must be such an one around his people.

Moreover, dear friends, you will find that *such a broad wall of separation is abundantly good for yourselves*. No Christian will tell you that when he has given way to the world's customs, he has ever been profited thereby. If you are tempted to seek an evening's amusement in a suspicious place, and if you are profited by it, I am as sure as you are a man that you are not a Christian, for if you were a Christian it would be no use to you. Ask a fish to spend an hour on dry land, and, assuredly it would not enjoy itself, for it would be out of its element. And it will be so with you in conversation with sinners; if you are compelled to it, you will feel much that grates upon the ear, that afflicts the heart, that annoys the soul. You will be like righteous Lot, who was vexed with the conversation of the wicked, and you will say with David,—

“Woe’s me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles stay,
To Kedar that belong!”

Your soul will pine and sigh to come out of every thing that is impure and unclean, for you will find no comfort there, and you will long to get away to the holy and the devout. Make a broad wall, dear friends, in your daily life, for if you begin to give way a little to the world you will soon give way a great deal. Give sin an inch, and it will take an ell. Take care of the pence-sins, and the pound-sins will not trouble you. Look after the little approaches to worldliness, the little compromises with ungodliness, and then you will not make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Another good reason for keeping up the broad wall of separation is, that *you will do most good to the world thereby*. I know Satan will tell you that if you bend a little, and come near to the ungodly, then they also will come a little way to meet you. Ay, but it is not so. You lose your strength, Christian, the moment you depart from your integrity. What do you think ungodly people say behind your back if they see you inconsistent to please them? “Oh!” say they, “there is nothing in it; the man is not sincere.” Although the world may openly denounce the rigid Puritan, it secretly admires him. When the big heart of the world speaks out, it has respect to the man that is sternly honest and will not yield his principles, no, not a hair’s breadth. In such an age as this, when there is so little preciseness, when principle is cast to the winds, and a general latitudinarianism, both of thought and of practice, rules the day, it is still the fact that a man who is decided and speaks his mind commands the reverence of mankind. Depend upon it, woman, your husband and your children will respect you none the more because you say, “I will give up some of my Christian privileges,” or “I will go occasionally with you into that which is sinful.” You cannot lift them out of the

mire if you plunge into the mud yourself. You cannot help to make them clean if you blacken your own hands. You, young men in the shop—you, young women in the work-room—if you keep yourselves to yourselves in Christ's name, chaste and pure for Jesus, not laughing at that which so often wins a laugh, but which is doubtful; not mixing up with a pleasure that is suspicious; but feeling, on the other hand, that to you a doubtful thing is a sinful thing, and only that which is of faith and of truth is tolerated by you—if you will so keep yourselves, your company in the midst of others shall be as though an angel shook his wings, and they will say to one another, "Mind what you are doing, for so-and-so is there." They will fear you, in a certain sense; they will admire you, and, who can tell but they at last may come to imitate you.

Would ye tempt God? Would ye challenge the desolating flood? Whenever the church mingles with the world, it behoves the faithful few to fly to the ark and seek shelter from the avenging storm. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair to look upon, then it was that God said it repented him that he had made men upon the face of the earth, and he sent the deluge to sweep them away. A separate people God's people must be, and they shall be. It is his own declaration, "The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be numbered among the people." The Jew is the type of the Christian. You may give the Jew political privileges, as he ought to have; he may be adopted into the State, as he ought to be; but a Jew he is, and a Jew he must be still. He is not a Gentile, even though he calls himself English, or Portuguese, or Spanish, or Polish. He remains one of Israel's seed, a child of Abraham, a Jew still; and you can mark him as such, his speech betrayeth him in every land. So should it be with the Christian; mixing up with other men, as he must in his daily calling; going in and out among them like a man among men; trading in the market; dealing in the shop; mingling in the joys of

the social circle ; taking his part in politics, like a citizen, as he is ; but, at the same time, having a higher and a nobler life, a secret into which the world cannot enter, and showing the world by his superior holiness, zeal for God, integrity, and truth, that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. You cannot tell how concerned I am for some of you, that this broad wall should be kept up, for I detect in you a desire to make it very thin, and perhaps to pull it down altogether. Brethren, beloved in the Lord, you may depend upon it that nothing worse can happen to a church than to be conformed to this world. Write "Ichabod" upon her walls, for the sentence of destruction has gone out against her. But if by the Holy Spirit you are

"Kept as a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground,"

you shall have your master's company ; your graces shall grow ; you shall be happy, and Christ shall be honored.

II. Secondly ; the broad wall round about Jerusalem INDICATED SAFETY.

In the same way, a broad wall round Christ's church indicates her safety too. I have often tried to show you who they are that belong to the church of God, I have explained to you that a man does not become a member of Christ's church by baptism, nor by birthright, nor by profession, nor by morality ; but that Christ is the door into the sheep-fold, and that every one who believes in Jesus Christ is a member of the true church, is a member of Christ, and a member consequently of the body of Christ, which is the church. Now, around the church of God, the election of grace, the redeemed by blood, the peculiar people, the adopted, the justified, the sanctified ; around these there are bulwarks of stupendous strength, munitions which cannot be stormed. When the foe came to attack Jerusalem he counted the towers and bulwarks, and marked them well ;

but after he had seen the strength of the Holy City he fled away. How could he hope ever to scale such ramparts as those? Brethren, Satan often counts the towers and bulwarks of the New Jerusalem. Anxiously does he desire the destruction of the saints, but it shall never be. He who rests in Christ is saved. He who hath passed through the gate of faith into the stronghold of salvation may sing, as we did just now—

“I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I’ve committed to his hands
Till the decisive hour.”

“I will be,” saith Jehovah, “a wall of fire round about thee.” “Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.”

The Christian is surrounded by *the broad wall of God’s power*. If God be omnipotent Satan cannot defeat him. If God’s power be on my side, who, then, shall hurt me? “If God be for us who can be against us?” The Christian is surrounded by the broad wall of *God’s love*. Whom God loves who shall curse? I know that he blesseth, and that whom he blesseth is blessed indeed. Balak, the son of Zippor, sought to curse the beloved people, and he went first to one hill-top and then to another, and looked down upon the chosen camp; but, aha! Balaam, thou couldst not curse them, though Balak sought it! Thou couldst only say, “They are blessed, yea, and they shall be blessed!”

God’s law is a broad wall around us, and so is *his justice* too. These once threatened our destruction, but now they demand our salvation. If Christ has died instead of me, it would not be justice if I had to die also for my sin. If God has received the full payment of the debt from the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, then how can he demand the debt again? He is satisfied, and we are secure.

The immutability of God, also, surrounds his people like a broad wall. “I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons

of Jacob are not consumed." As long as God is the same, the rock of our salvation will be our secure hiding-place.

Brethren and sisters, this is a very delightful truth, and one upon which we might linger long, for there is much to say. The people of God are safe for many reasons. They are surrounded by the broad wall of *electing love*. Doth God choose them and will he lose them? Did he ordain them to eternal life, and shall they perish? Did he engrave their names upon his heart, and shall those names be blotted out? Did he give them to his Son to be his heritage, and shall his Son lose his portion? Did he say, "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels," and shall he lose them? Has he who maketh all things obey him, no power to keep the people whom he has chosen to himself to be his own peculiar heritage? God forbid that we should doubt it. Electing love, like a broad wall, surrounds every heir of grace.

Then comes the broad wall of *redeeming love*. Did Jesus buy what he will not have? Did he shed his blood in vain? Did he stand as a substitute for those who will have to suffer themselves? What substitution, then, is this? Doth God take payment at my surety's hands, and then demand it a second time at mine? Where is the justice if such be the case? By the blood of the everlasting covenant every Christian may be sure that he cannot perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hand. Unless the cross was all a peradventure, unless the atonement was a mere speculation, those whom Jesus died for are saved through his death, and he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Another broad wall which surrounds the saints of God will be found in *the work of the Holy Spirit*. Does the Spirit begin and not finish? Does he give life which afterwards dies out? Hath he not told us that the Word of God is the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever? And shall the powers of hell or the evil of our own

flesh kill what God says is incorruptible? Is not the spirit of God given us to abide with us forever, and shall he be expelled from that heart in which he has taken up his everlasting dwelling-place? Brethren, we are not of the mind of those who think so, but we rejoice to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that he who hath begun a good work in you will carry it on." As we sometimes sing—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrow or from sins;
The work which wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

Besides this, almost *every doctrine of grace* affords us a broad wall, a strong bastion and bulwark, a munition of defence. Take, for instance, Christ's suretyship engagements. He is surety to his Father for his people. Will he bring home merely a remnant of the flock? Shall a portion of them be lost? At his hands will they be required, and he will say, "Here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me. Of all whom thou hast given me I have lost none." He will keep all his saints even to the end. *The honor of Christ*, moreover, makes another broad wall. If Christ loses one soul that leans upon him, the integrity of his crown is gone, for if there should be one believing soul in hell the prince of darkness would hold up that soul and say—"Aha! Thou couldst not save them all! Aha! thou Captain of Salvation, thou wast defeated here! Here is one poor little Benjamin, one Ready-to-Halt, that thou couldst not bring to glory, and I have him to be my prey forever!" But it shall not be so. Every gem shall be in Jesus's crown. Every sheep shall be in Jesus's flock. He shall not be defeated in any way, or in any measure, but He shall divide the spoil with the strong, and conquer even to the end. Glory be unto his name!

Thus I have tried to show you the broad walls which are round about believers. They are saved, and they may

say to their enemies, "The virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at thee and laughed thee to scorn! Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that hath risen again; who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us! For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

III. Lastly: The idea of a broad wall SUGGESTS ENJOYMENT.

Along the broad walls of Nineveh and Babylon there was found room for several chariots to pass each other, and here men walked at sunset, and talked in quiet. If you have ever been in the city of York you will know how interesting it is to walk around the broad walls of the city. But our figure is drawn from the Orientals. They were accustomed to come out of their houses and walk on the walls. They used them *for rest from toil*, and recreation. It was very delightful when the sun was going down, and all was cool, to walk on those broad walls; and so, when a believer comes to know the deep things of God, and to see the defences of God's people, he walks along them and finds rest. "Now," saith he, "I am at peace; he who destroyeth is put from me; I am delivered from the noise of archers in the place of the drawing of water, and here will I praise the Lord! Now that salvation is appointed for walls and bulwarks, I will sing a song unto him who hath done great things for me; I will take my rest and be quiet, for he that believeth hath entered into rest; there is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Broad walls, then, are for rest, and so are our broad walls of salvation.

Broad walls were also *for communion*. Men came there and conversed with one another. They leaned over the wall and whispered their loving words, talked of their business, comforted one another, and related their troubles and their joys. So, when believers come unto Christ Jesus they commune with one another, with the angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, and with Jesus Christ their Lord, whose fellowship is best of all. On those broad walls, when the banner of love waves over them, they rejoice with a joy unspeakable, in fellowship with him who loved them and gave himself for them. It is a blessed thing in the Church when you possess such a knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel that you can have by their means the sweetest communion with all the Church of the living God.

Then the broad walls were also intended *for prospects and outlooks*. The citizen came up on the wall, and looked away from the smoke and dirt of the city within, right across to the green fields, and the gleaming river, and the far off mountains, delighted to watch the mowing of hay, or the reaping of corn, or the setting sun beyond the distant hills. It was one of the common enjoyments of the citizen of any walled city to come to the top of the wall in order to take views afar. And when a man once gets into the altitudes of gospel doctrines, and has learned to understand the love of God in Christ Jesus, what views he can take! How he looks down upon the sorrows of life! He looks beyond that narrow stream of death! When the weather is bright and his eye is clear enough to let him use the telescope, he can see within the gates of pearl, and behold the joys which no mortal eye hath seen, and hear the songs which no mortal ear hath heard, for these are things, not for eyes and ears, but for hearts and spirits! Blessed is the man who dwelleth in the Church of God, for he can find on her broad walls places from which he can see the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off!

Ah! dear friends, I wish that these things had to do

with you all, but I am afraid that for many my discourse is an idle tale, for many of you are outside the wall, and remember when the destroyer comes none will be safe but those who are inside the wall of Christ's love and mercy. I would to God that you would hasten to the city gate to-night, for it is open. It will be shut—it must be shut one day, but it is open now. When night comes, the night of death, the gate will be closed, and you will come then and say, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But the answer will be—

"Too late, too late!

Ye cannot enter now!"

But it is not too late at this moment. Still Christ the Lord crieth, "Behold, I set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Oh! that thou hadst the will to come and put thy trust in Jesus, for if thou dost so thou shalt be saved. I cannot speak to some of you about security, for there are no broad walls to defend you; you have run away from true security and are patching up with untempered mortar a righteousness of your own, which will all be thrown down, for at best it is only a bowing wall and as a tottering fence. Oh! that you would trust in Jesus! Then would you have a broad wall to shelter you which all the battering-rams of hell shall never be able to shake. When the storms of eternity shall beat against that wall it shall stand fast for aye.

I cannot speak to some of you about rest, and enjoyment, and communion, for you are looking for rest where there is none; you are slumbering in a peace which is no peace; you have found a comfort which will be your destruction. God make you to be distressed, that you may flee to the Lord Jesus and get true peace, for "He is our peace."

I would that some of you would close in with Christ and trust him, and then you would rejoice in the present happiness which faith would give you; and in the prospect of the eternal happiness which Christ has prepared for all those who put their trust in him.

May the Lord bless you for Jesu's sake. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE STAR OF JACOB.

"THERE SHALL COME A STAR OUT OF JACOB."—Num. xxiv. 17.

THIS prophecy may have some reference to David ; but we feel persuaded that the true design of the Holy Spirit is to set forth an emblem of our Lord Jesus Christ. All nature, above as well as around us, is laid under contribution to set forth our Lord. All the flowers of the field and many of the beasts of the plain, and now the very orbs of heaven, are turned into metaphors and symbols by which the glory of Jesus may be manifested to us. Where God takes such pains to teach, we ought to be at pains to learn. When he makes heaven and earth to be the illustration of his book, we ought to be most ardent in its study. Oh, you who have neglected to learn of Christ, may that neglect come to an end, and may some word be spoken at this time which shall be as the beaming of a star into the darkness of your soul, that henceforth you may know Christ, and be found in him.

Our Lord then is compared to a star, and we shall have seven reasons to assign for this, upon each of which we shall endeavor to speak with brevity.

I. In the first place ; he is called a star as THE SYMBOL OF GOVERNMENT.

You will observe how evidently it is connected with a sceptre and with a conqueror. Jacob was to be blessed with a valiant leader who should become a triumphant sovereign. Very frequently in Oriental literature their great

men and especially their great deliverers, are called stars. The star has been constantly associated with monarchy, and even in our own country we look upon the star as one of the emblems of lofty rank. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ as the star of Jacob. He is the captain of his people, the leader of the Lord's hosts, the King in Jeshurun, God over all, glorious and blessed forever !

We may say of Jesus, in this respect, *that he has an authority which he has inherited by right*. He made all things, and by him all things consist. It is but just that he should rule over all things. As there is not a tongue that can move, in heaven or in earth, except by his permission, it is meet that every tongue should "confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Oh ! that men were just towards the Son of God ! Would that their rebellious souls would give way to the force of rectitude, that they would no longer say, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us !" Unconverted man, I would that you would yield to Jesus. He has a right to you. It is through his intercessions that your forfeited life is still spared. It is by his Divine goodness that you are where you are tonight, and through his mediatorial sovereignty it is that you are suffered to be on praying grounds and pleading terms with God. Give him his due, then. Rob him not of the allegiance which he so justly claims. Give not your spirit over to that exacting tyrant who seeks to compass your destruction. "Bow the knee and kiss the Son," even now, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." Acknowledge him to be your Lord.

Our Lord as a star *has an authority which he has valiantly won*. Wherever Christ is King he has had a great and stern fight for it. Remember the dread conflict in Gethsemane, of which he says, "I have trodden the wine press alone." When, red with his own gore, he came from Calvary, he had in fact there and then put to flight the hosts of Bozrah and of Edom, and stained his garments with the

crimson of the vanquished. He travelled in the greatness of his strength and he is mighty still to save. In every human heart where Jesus rules, he reigns through having dislodged by the force of arms the old tyrant who had fixed his dominion there. The maintenance of his sovereignty within the heart is the result of his powerful sceptre of love and grace. Oh, that King Jesus would put forth his power and get a throne in more hearts! Believers, do you not long to see him glorious? I know you do, if you love him. You would live for this: you would die for this,—that Christ might have his own, and drive the milk-white steeds of triumph through the streets of Jerusalem, all his people bowing before him, and strewing his pathway with their honors. Oh! sinners, would to God that you would yield to him; I pray that now he may gird his sword upon his thigh, and by the power of grace constrain you to bow your willing necks to his silver sceptre. Brethren and sisters, it is a mournful fact that Christ has so small a part of the world as yet in his royal power. See, the gods of the heathen stand fast upon their pedestals. The old harlot of Rome still flaunts her scarlet. The crescent of Mahomet wanes, but still its baleful light is cast athwart the nations. Why tarries he! Perhaps his finger is on the latch; it may be that he will come ere long. Come quickly, Lord! our yearning hearts beseech thee, come! But meanwhile, it is for you and for me to be fighting—each soldier in his rank, each man standing in his place, as his Master has bidden him, contending with heart and soul and strength for the right and for the true, for faith, for holiness, for the Cross and all that that Cross indicates amongst the sons of men. Blessed star of Jacob! Thou shinest with no borrowed rays; thou shinest with a mysterious power which none gave to thee, for it is inherently thine own.

Before leaving this point, I will only add, that this kingdom of Christ, *wherever it is, is most beneficent.* Wherever this star of government shines its rays scatter

blessings. Jesus is no tyrant. He rules not by oppression. The force he uses is the force of love. There was never a subject of Christ's kingdom that complained of him. Those who have served him most have longed to serve him more. Why, even his poor martyrs in the catacombs of Rome, dying of starvation, or dragged up to the Colosseum to be devoured by wild beasts, never said an ill word of him. Certainly if it was hard to any, it was hard to them; but the more they were troubled the more they rejoiced; and there never were sweeter songs than those which came from dying lips, when men were crackling on the faggot, or being torn limb from limb by wild horses, or sawn asunder with cruel saws. Just in proportion as the bodily pains become acute, the spiritual joy became intense; and while the outward man decayed, the inner man leaped up into newness of life, anticipating the joys of the first-born before the throne. He is a good Master. Young people, I would that you would serve him! Oh! that you were enlisted in his service. It is now two-and-twenty years since I gave my heart to him, but I cannot say a word against him. Nay, but I wish I had always served him; I wish I had served him before, and I do pray that he may use me to the fullest extent even to old age. If he will make but a door mat for his temple of me I shall be but too glad. If he will let my name be cast out as evil and give my body to the dogs, I do not care so long as his truth does but prosper, and his name be great. But alas! there is so much self in us, so much pride, and I know not what besides, that we who really know the Master have reason to ask him to bring in his great artillery, and blow down the castles of our natural corruption, conquer us yet again, and rule in us by main force of grace, till in every part and corner of our spirit there shall be nothing but the love of Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

By the star, then, in the first place, we understand the symbol of government.

II. In the second place, the star is THE IMAGE OF BRIGHTNESS.

When men wish to speak of brightness they talk of the stars. They who are righteous are as the stars, and "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Our Lord Jesus Christ is brightness itself. The star is but a poor setting forth of his ineffable splendor. Oh! let the thought come home to you. He is the brightness of his Father's glory—unutterably bright *as the Deity*. He is brightness himself *in his human nature*, for in him there is neither spot nor wrinkle. As Mediator, exalted on high, enjoying the reward of his pains, he is bright indeed. Observe, that our Lord as a star is a bright particular star in the matter of *holiness*. In him was no sin. Look, and look, and look again into his star-like character; even the lynx eyes of infidels have not been able to discover a flaw, while the attentive eyes of critics, when they have been believers, have been made to water again and again, and then to glisten and sparkle, as they have seen the mingling of all the perfections in his adorable character, making up one inimitable perfection.

As a star he shines also with the light of *knowledge*. Moses was, as it were, a man of the mist, but Christ is the prophet of light. "The Law was given by Moses"—a thing of types and shadows—"but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." If any man be taught in the things of God he must derive his light from the star of Bethlehem. You may go as you will to the universities, to the tomes of the learned, to the schools of the philosophers, but in spiritual things you receive no light till you look up to Jesus, and then in his light you see light, for there is transcendent brightness in him. He is the wisdom of God as well as the power of God; he is the way, the truth, and the life. Divine light has found its centre in him!

His light, too, is that of *comfort*. Oh! how many in the darkness of their souls have first found peace by looking

up to this star of Jacob, the Lord Jesus Christ ! Well did our hymn put it :—

“ He is my soul’s bright morning star,
And he my rising sun.”

One glimpse of Christ, and the midnight of unbelief is over. A clear sight of the five wounds, and your sins are covered, and your iniquities put away. Happy day, happy day, when first the soul beholds a crucified Redeemer, and gives herself up to him, relying upon him for eternal salvation. Shine, sweet star ; shine into some benighted heart just now ! Give holiness, give light, give the knowledge of God, give joy and peace in believing.

When speaking upon Christ as a star, “the symbol of government,” I said, submit to him ; now speaking of him as a star, the image of brightness, I say look to him. Look to him. It is the gospel’s precept. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth ;” and well do we sing—

“ There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

Poor sinner, delay no longer. You are not asked to do any thing, nor to be any thing, nor to feel any thing ; you are simply bidden to look away from self to what Christ has done, and you shall live.

“ View him prostrate in the garden,
On the ground your Maker lies ;
On the bloody tree behold him,
Hear him cry before he dies—
‘ It is finished,’
Sinner, will not this suffice ?”

Look unto him, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth !

III. Thirdly, our Lord is compared to a star, to bring out the fact that HE IS THE PATTERN OF CONSTANCY.

Ten thousand things have changed since the world be-

gan, but the stars have not. There they remain. We dreamed at one time that they moved. Untaught imaginations said that all those stars revolved around this little globe of ours, but we know better now. There they are both day and night—always the same, and we may say they have not changed since the world begun, nor, probably, will they, till, like a vesture, God shall roll creation up because it is outworn. It is very delightful to recollect that the same star which I looked at last night was viewed by Abraham, perhaps with some of the self-same thoughts. And when we have gone, and other generations shall have followed us, those that come after will look up to the self-same star. So with our Lord Jesus, he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. What the prophets and apostles saw in him we can see in him, and what he was to them that he is to us, and shall be to generations yet unborn. Hundreds may be looking at the same stars at the same time without knowing it, for they are a meeting-place for many eyes. We may be drifted to Australia, or to Canada, or to the United States, or we may be sailing across the great deep, but we shall see the stars there. It is true that on the other side of the world we shall see another set of stars, but the stars themselves are always the same. As far as we in this northern hemisphere are concerned, we shall look upon the same stars, so wherever we may be we look to the same Christ. Yonder brother has learning; but he looks to Christ, and he sees the same Christ as the poor unlettered woman in the aisles. And you, poor man, who have not, perhaps, a sixpence in the world, you have the same Christ to trust in as the richest man in all the world. And you who think you are so obscure that no one knows you but your God, you look to this same star, and it shines with the same beams for you as for the Christian who leads the van in the Lord's hosts. Jesus Christ is still the same, the same to all his people, the same in all places, the same for ever and ever, and may well be compared to those bright stars that shine now as they did of old.

IV. In the fourth place, we may trace this comparison of our Lord to a star as THE FOUNTAIN OF INFLUENCE.

The old astrologers believed very firmly in the influence of the stars upon men's destinies. Without endorsing their exploded fallacies, we meet in Scripture with expressions like this—"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?"—alluding, no doubt, to the fact that the Pleiades are in the ascendant in the sweet months of spring, when the sweet influences of the spring are bringing forth the May flowers and all the loveliness of the season, and Orion is in the ascendant as a wintry sign, when the bands of frost are binding up the former liberties of nature. But, whether there be an influence in the stars or not, as touching this world, I know there is great influence in Jesus Christ. He is the fountain of all holy influences among the sons of men. Where this star shines upon the graves of men who are dead in sin they begin to live. Where the beams of this star light upon captives, their chains drop off, "the prisoner leaps to lose his chains." When this star gleams upon a Christian, he begins to bud and blossom, and precious fruits are brought forth. When this star shines upon the backslider he mends his ways, and follows, like the eastern sages, its light till he finds his Saviour once more. This star has an influence upon our nativity; it is through its benign rays that we are born again, and in our horoscope it has an influence upon our death, for it is in its light that we fall asleep, believing that we shall wake up in the image of the Lord Jesus. Oh! sweet star, shine on me always! Never let me miss thy rays; but may I always walk in thy light till I be found sitting in the full noontide heat of the Sun of Righteousness for ever and ever.

V. In the fifth place, the Lord Jesus Christ may be compared to a star as A SOURCE OF GUIDANCE.

Certain stars are extremely useful to sailors. I scarcely know how else the great and wide sea would be navigated,

especially if it were not for the Pole Star. Jesus is the Pole Star to us. How the poor runaway in the olden times, when slavery had not been abolished, must have blessed God for that pole star—so easy to find out and so sure a guide. Any child with but a moment's teaching will soon discover it in the midst of its fellows at night, and when the negro had once learned to distinguish the star that shone over the land of freedom, he followed it through the great dismal swamps, or along the open roads, which were more dreadful still; he forded the streams, and climbed the mountains, cheered by freedom's star. Such is Jesus Christ to the seeker. He leads to liberty; he conducts to peace. Oh! I wish you would follow him, some of you who are going about a thousand ways to find peace where you never will find it. From this pulpit I think there is never a Sunday but what I try to speak, sometimes in gentler tones, and at other seasons with thundering notes, the simple truth that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I do try to make it plain to you that it is not your prayers and tears, your doings, your willings, your any thing, that can save you, but that all your help is laid upon One that is mighty, and that you must look alone to him. Yet, sinners, you are still looking to yourselves. You rake the dung-hills of your human nature to find the pearl of great price which is not there. You will look beneath the ice of your natural depravity to find the flame of comfort which is not there. You might as well seek in hell itself to find heaven as look into your own works and merits to find sure ground of trust. Down with your self-reliances! Down with them, every one of them! Away with all those confidences of yours, for

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

Just reverse that helm, and shift that sail, and tack about! Follow not the wrecker's beacon on yonder shore, luring you to the rocks of self-delusion, but where that pole star

guides you, thither let your vessel drift, and pray the favoring gales of the blessed Spirit to guide you rightly to the port of peace.

VI. Our Lord is compared to a star, surely, as THE OBJECT OF WONDER.

Among the first lines which full many of you ever learned to recite, were these simple ones—

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.”

That is precisely what Galileo might have said, and exactly what the greatest astronomer that ever lived might say. You have sometimes looked through a telescope and have seen the planets, but after you have looked at them you do not know much about them, and those who are busy all day and all night long taking constant observations, will also confess that the result is rather that of astonishment than of intelligence. Still it is

“How I wonder what you are.”

So to those of us who are in Christ Jesus, he is a star; but oh! brethren, we may well wonder what he is. We used to think when we were little ones that the stars were holes picked in the skies through which the light of heaven shone, or that they were little pieces of gold-dust that God had strewn about. We do not think so now; we understand that they are much greater than they look to be. Now, when we were carnal, and did not know King Jesus, we esteemed him to be very much like anybody else; but now we begin to know him, we find out that he is much greater, infinitely greater, than we thought he was. And as we grow in grace we find him to be more glorious still. A little star to our view at first, he has grown, in our estimation, into a sun now, a blazing sun by whose beams our soul is refreshed. Ah! but when we get to him what will he be? Imagine you are taken up now by an angel's wing to take a journey

to a star. Travelling at an inconceivable rate you open your eyes on a sudden and say—"How wonderful! Why, that which was a star just now has become as large to my vision as the sun at noon-day." "Stop," says the angel; "you shall see greater things than these," and as you speed on, the disc of that orb increases till it is equal to a hundred suns; and now you say, "But what? Am I not near it now?" "No," says the angel; "that enormous globe is still far, far away," and when you come to it you will find it to be such a wondrous world that arithmetic could not compute its size, nor imagination belt it with the zone of fancy. Now, such is Jesus Christ. I said he grows upon his people here, but what must it be to see him *there*, when the veil is lifted, and we behold him face to face? Sometimes we long to find out what that star is, to know him, to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; but meanwhile we are compelled to sit down and sing—

"God only knows the love of God,
Oh! that it now were shed abroad
In this poor frozen heart."

We have to confess that

"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depth to see,
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height."

VII. But to conclude; the metaphor used in the text may well bear this seventh signification. Our Lord is compared to a star, as HE IS THE HERALD OF GLORY.

The bright and morning star foretells that the sun is on its way to gladden the earth with its light. Wherever Jesus comes he is the prophet of good. Let him come into a heart, and as soon as he appears you may rest assured that there is a life of eternity and joy to come. Let Jesus Christ come into a family, and what changes he makes there.

Let him be preached with power in any town or city, and what a herald of good things he is there. To the whole world Christ has proclaimed glad tidings. His coming has been fraught with benedictions to the sons of men. Yea, the coming of Christ in the flesh is the great prophecy of the glory to be revealed in the latter days, when all nations shall bow before him, and the age of peace, the golden age shall come, not because civilization has advanced, not because education has increased, or the world grown better, but because Christ has come. He is the first, the fairest of the stars, the prognostic of the dawn.

Ay, and because Christ has come, there will be a heaven for the sons of men who believe in him. Sons of toil, because Christ has come there shall be rest for the weary. Daughters of sorrow, because Christ has come there shall be healing for the weak. Oh! you whom chill penury is bowing down, there shall be lifting up and sacred wealth for you because the star has shone. Hope on! hope ever! Now that Jesus has come there is no room for despair.

I conclude by commending these thoughts to you, and earnestly asking you once again if you have never looked to Christ, to trust in him now; if you have never submitted to Jesus, to submit to him now; if you have never confided in him, to confide in him now. It is a very simple matter. May God the Holy Spirit teach you what it is. It is but to give up all your own trust and make him every thing. Here it is in one short rhyme.

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall:
Be thou my strength, my righteousness,
My Saviour and my all."

If this be done by you, all is done for you by Christ. You are his, and he is yours, and where he is, shall be your portion, and you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is. It will be a blessed Sabbath evening for you, if you are led now to give yourselves to him. I well recollect when

my heart yielded to his Divine grace ; when I could no longer look anywhere else, and was compelled to look to the Star of Bethlehem. Oh ! come ye to him ! I know not what words to employ or what persuasions. For your own sake, that you may be happy now ; for eternity's sake, that you may be happy hereafter, that you may escape from hell ; that you may enter into heaven, look to Jesus. You may never be bidden to do so again. The bidding of this present moment may be the last, and its rejection the concluding measure which shall fill up the heap of your guilt. Oh ! do not do so. Let the prayer go up quietly now from your spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and let your soul, though you speak not with your tongue, say within itself—

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives ;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try ;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.

"But, if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
That were to die, delightful thought,
~~As~~ sinner never died."

SERMON VII

AN UNALTERABLE STATUTE.

“WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD THERE IS NO REMISSION.”—Hebrews ix 22.

EVERYWHERE under the old figurative dispensation, blood was sure to greet your eyes. It was the one most prominent thing under the Jewish economy, scarcely a ceremony was observed without it. You could not enter into any part of the tabernacle but you saw traces of the blood-sprinkling. Sometimes there were bowls of blood cast at the foot of the altar. The place looked so like a shambles, that to visit it must have been far from attractive to the natural taste; and to delight in it, a man had need of a spiritual understanding and a lively faith. The slaughter of animals was the manner of worship; the effusion of blood was the appointed rite, and the diffusion of that blood on the floor, on the curtains, and on the vestments of the priests, was the constant memorial. When Paul says that almost all things were, under the law, purged with blood, he alludes to a few things that were exempted. Thus you will find in several passages the people were exhorted to wash their clothes, and certain persons who had been unclean from physical causes, were bidden to wash their clothes with water. Garments worn by men were usually cleansed with water. After the defeat of the Midianites, of which you read in the book of Numbers, the spoil which had been polluted had to be purified before it was claimed by the victorious Israelites. According to the ordinance of the law

which the Lord commanded Moses, some of the goods, such as raiment and articles made of skins or goat's hair, were purified with water, while other things that were of metal that could abide the fire, were purified by fire. Still the Apostle refers to a literal fact, when he says that almost all things, garments being the only exception, were purged, under the law, with blood. Then he refers to it as a general truth under the old legal dispensation, that there was never any pardoning of sin except by blood. In one case only was there an apparent exception, and even that goes to prove the universality of the rule, because the reason for the exception is so fully given. The trespass-offering, referred to as an alternative, in Leviticus v. 11, might, in extreme cases of excessive poverty, be a bloodless offering. If a man was too poor to bring an offering from the flock, he was to bring two turtle-doves or young pigeons ; but if he was too poor even for that, he might offer the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering, without oil or frankincense, and it was cast upon the fire. That is the one solitary exception through all the types. In every place, at every time, in every instance where sin had to be removed, blood must flow—life must be given. The one exception we have noticed, gives emphasis to the statute that, “without shedding of blood, there is no remission.” Under the Gospel there is no exception, not such an isolated one as there was under the law ; no, not even for the extremely poor. Such we all are spiritually. Since we have not any of us to bring an offering, any more than an offering to bring ; but we have all of us to take the offering which has already been presented, and to accept the sacrifice which Christ has, of himself, made in our stead, there is now no cause or ground for exemption to any man or woman born, nor ever shall there be, either in this world or in that which is to come, —“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission.” With great simplicity then, as it concerns our salvation, may I ask the attention of each one here present, to this

great matter which intimately concerns our everlasting interests.

I gather from the text, first of all, the encouraging fact that *there is such a thing as remission*—that is to say, the remission of sin. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” Blood has been shed, and there is therefore hope concerning such a thing. Remission, notwithstanding the stern requirements of the law, is not to be abandoned in sheer despair. The word remission means the putting away of debts. Just as sin may be regarded as a debt incurred to God, so that debt may be blotted out, cancelled, and obliterated. The sinner, God’s debtor, may cease to be in debt by compensation, by full acquittance, and may be set free by virtue of such remission. Such a thing is *possible*. Glory be to God, the remission of all sin of which it is possible to repent is possible to be obtained. Whatever the transgression of any man may be, pardon is possible to him if repentance be possible to him. Unrepented sin is unforgivable sin. If he confess his sin and forsake it, then shall he find mercy. God hath so declared it, and he will not be unfaithful to his word. “But is there not,” saith one, “a sin which is unto death?” Yea, verily, though I know not what it is; nor do we think that any who have inquired into the subject have been able to discover what that sin is; this much seems clear, that practically the sin is unforgivable because it is never repented of. The man who commits it becomes, to all intents and purposes, dead in sin in a more deep and lasting sense even than the human race is as a whole, and he is given up case-hardened—his conscience seared, as it were, with a hot iron, and henceforth he will seek no mercy. But all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. For lust, for robbery, for adultery—yea, for murder, there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared. He is the Lord God, merciful and gracious, passing by transgression, iniquity and sin.

And this forgiveness which is possible is, according to

the Scriptures, *complete* ; that is to say, when God forgives a man his sin he does it outright. He blots out the debt without any back reckoning. He does not put away a part of the man's sin and leave him accountable for the rest, but in the moment in which a sin is forgiven, his iniquity is as though it had never been committed ; he is received in the Father's house and embraced with the Father's love as if he had never erred ; he is made to stand before God as accepted, and in the same condition as though he had never transgressed. Blessed be God, believer, there is no sin in God's Book against thee. If thou hast believed thou art forgiven—forgiven not partially, but altogether. The handwriting that was against thee is blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ, and can never be pleaded against thee any more for ever. The pardon is complete.

Moreover, this is a *present* pardon. It is an imagination of some (very derogatory to the Gospel) that you cannot get pardon till you come to die, and perhaps then in some mysterious way ; in the last few minutes, you may be absolved ; but we preach to you, in the name of Jesus, immediate and present pardon for all transgressions—a pardon given in an instant—the moment that a sinner believes in Jesus ; not as though a disease were healed gradually and required months and long years of progress. True, the corruption of our nature is such a disease, and the sin that dwelleth in us must be daily and hourly mortified ; but as for the guilt of our transgressions before God and the debt incurred to his justice, the remission thereof is not a thing of progress and degree. The pardon of a sinner is granted at once ; it will be given to any of you to-night who accept it—yea, and given you in such a way that you shall never lose it. Once forgiven, you shall be forgiven forever, and none of the consequences of sin shall be visited upon you. You shall be absolved unreservedly and eternally, so that when the heavens are on a blaze, and the great white throne is set up, and the last great assize is held, you may stand boldly before the

judgment-seat and fear no accusation, for the forgiveness which God himself vouchsafes he will never revoke.

I will add to this another remark. This pardon is *perceptible*. The man who gets it may know he has it. Did he merely hope he had it, that hope might often struggle with fear. Did he merely trust he had it, many a qualm might startle him; but to *know* that he has it is a sure ground of peace to the heart. Glory be to God, the privileges of the covenant of grace are not only matters of hope and surmise, but they are matters of faith, conviction and assurance. Count it not presumption for a man to believe God's Word. God's own Word it is that says, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ is not condemned." If I believe in Jesus Christ, then I am not condemned. What right have I to think I am? If God says I am not, it would be presumption on my part to think I am condemned. It cannot be presumption to take God's Word just as He gives it to me. "Oh," saith one, "how happy should I be if this might be my case." Thou hast well spoken, "for blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute iniquity." "But," saith another, "I should hardly think such a great thing could be possible to such a one as I am." Thou reasonest after the manner of the sons of men. Know then that as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts. It is yours to err, it is God's to forgive. You err like a man, but God does not pardon like a man; he pardons like a God, so that we burst forth with wonder and sing, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that passeth by transgression, iniquity and sin?" When you make any thing it is some little work suitable to your abilities, but our God has made the heavens. When you forgive, it is some forgiveness suitable to your nature and circumstances; but when he forgives, he displays the riches of his grace on a grander scale than your finite mind can com-

prehend. Ten thousand sins of blackest dye, sins of a hellish hue he doth in a moment put away, for he delighteth in mercy; and judgment is His strange work. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live." This is a joyful note with which my text furnishes me. There is no remission except with blood; but there is remission, for the blood has been shed.

Coming more closely to the text, we have now to insist on its great lesson, that *though there be pardon of sin it is never without blood*. That is a sweeping sentence, for there are some in this world that are trusting for the pardon of sin to their repentance. It, beyond question, is your duty to repent of your sin. If you have disobeyed God, you *should* be sorry for it. To cease from sin is but the duty of the creature, else sin is not the violation of God's holy law. But be it known unto you, that all the repentance in the world cannot blot out the smallest sin. If you had only one sinful thought cross your mind, and you should grieve over that all the days of your life, yet the stain of that sin could not be removed even by the anguish it cost you. Where repentance is the work of the Spirit of God, it is a very precious gift, and is a sign of grace, but there is no atoning power in repentance. In a sea-full of penitential tears there is not the power or the virtue to wash out one spot of this hideous uncleanness. Without the blood-shedding there is no remission. But others suppose, that at any rate, active reformation growing out of repentance may achieve the task. What if drunkenness be given up and temperance become the rule? What if licentiousness be abandoned and chastity adorn the character? What if dishonest dealing be relinquished and integrity be scrupulously maintained in every action? I say, 'tis well; I would to God such reformations took place everywhere,—yet, for all that, debts already incurred are not paid by our not getting into debt further, and past delinquencies are

not condoned by future good behavior. So sin is not remitted by reformation. Though ye should suddenly become immaculate as angels (not that such a thing is possible to you, for the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots), your reformations could make no atonement to God for the sins that are past in the days that you have transgressed against him. "What then," saith the man, "shall I do?" There are those who think now that their prayers and their humblings of soul may perhaps effect something for them. Your prayers, if they be sincere, I would not stay; rather do I hope they may be such prayers as betoken spiritual life. But, oh, dear hearer, there is no efficacy in prayer to blot out sin. I will put it strongly. All the prayers of all the saints on earth, and, if the saints in heaven could all join, all their prayers could not blot out through their own natural efficacy the sin of a single evil word. No, there is no detergent power in prayer. God has never set it to be a cleanser. It has its uses and its valuable uses. It is one of the privileges of the man who prays, that he prays acceptably, but prayer itself can never blot out the sin without the blood. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission," pray as you may.

There are persons who have thought that self-denial and mortifications of an extraordinary kind might rid them of their guilt. We do not often come across such people in our circle, yet there be those who in order to purge themselves of sin flagellate their bodies, observe protracted fasts wear sackcloth and hair shirts next their skin, and even some have gone so far as to imagine that to refrain from ablutions and to allow their body to be filthy was the readiest mode of purifying their soul. A strange infatuation certainly! Yet to-day in Hindostan you shall find the fakir passing his body through marvellous sufferings and distortions, in the hope of getting rid of sin. To what purpose is it all? Methinks I hear the Lord say, "What is this to me that thou didst bow thy head like a bulrush, and wrap thyself

in sackcloth, and eat ashes with thy bread, and mingle wormwood with thy drink? Thou hast broken My law; these things cannot repair it; thou hast done injury to My honor by thy sin; but where is the righteousness that reflects honor upon My name?" The old cry in the olden days was, "Wherewithal shall we come before God?" and they said, "Shall we give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul?" Alas! it was all in vain. Here stands the sentence. Here forever must it stand: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is the life God demands as the penalty due for sin, and nothing but the life indicated in the blood-shedding will ever satisfy him.

Observe, again, how this sweeping text puts away all confidence in ceremony, even the ceremonies of God's own ordinance. There are some who suppose that sin can be washed away in baptism. Ah, futile fancy! The expression where it is once used in Scripture implies nothing of the kind—it has no such meaning as some attach to it, for that very Apostle, of whom it was said, gloried that he had not baptized many persons lest they should suppose there was some efficacy in his administration of the rite. Baptism is an admirable ordinance in which the believer holds fellowship with Christ in his death. It is a symbol; it is nothing more. Tens of thousands and millions have been baptized and have died in their sins. Or what profit is there in "the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass," as Antichrist puts it? Do any say it is "an unbloody sacrifice," yet at the same time offer it for a propitiation for sin—we fling this text in their faces? "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Do they reply that the blood is there in the body of Christ; We answer that even were it so, that would not meet the case, for it is without the shedding of blood—without the blood-shedding; the blood as distinct from the flesh; without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

And here I must pass on to make a distinction that will

go deeper still. Jesus Christ himself cannot save us, apart from his blood. It is a supposition which only folly has ever made, but we must refute even the hypothesis of folly, when it affirms that the example of Christ can put away human sin, that the holy life of Jesus Christ has put the race on such a good footing with God that now he can forgive its faults and its transgression. Not so; not the holiness of Jesus, not the life of Jesus, not the death of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus only; for "Without shedding of blood there is no remission."

And I have met with some who think so much of the second coming of Christ, that they seem to have fixed their entire faith upon Christ in his glory. I believe this to be the fault of Irvingism—that too much it holds before the sinner's eye Christ on the throne, whereas, though Christ on the throne is ever the loved and adorable, yet we must see Christ upon the Cross, or we never can be saved. Thy faith must not be placed merely in Christ glorified, but in Christ crucified. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." I remember one person who was united with this Church (the dear sister may be present now), that had been for some years a professor, and had never enjoyed peace with God, nor produced any of the fruits of the Spirit. She said, "I have been in a church where I was taught to rest upon Christ glorified, and I did so fix my confidence, such as it was, upon him, that I neither had a sense of sin, nor a sense of pardon; for Christ crucified I did not know, and until I had seen him as shedding his blood and making a propitiation, I never entered into rest." Yes, we will say it again, for the text is vitally important: "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission," not even with Christ himself. It is the sacrifice that he has offered for us, that is, the means of putting away our sin,—that, and nothing else.

Let us pass on a little further with the same truth. This remission of sin is to be found at the foot of the cross. There is remission to be had through Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed. The hymn we sang at the commencement of the service, gave you the marrow of the doctrine.* We owe to God a debt of punishment for sin. Was that debt due or not? If the law was right, the penalty ought to be exacted. If the penalty was too severe, and the law inaccurate, then God made a mistake. But it is blasphemy to suppose that. The law, then, being a righteous law, and the penalty just, shall God do an unjust thing? It will be an unjust thing for him not to carry out the penalty. Would you have him to be unjust? He had declared that the soul that sinned should die; would you have God to be a liar? Shall he eat his words to save his creatures? "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The law's sentence must be carried out. It was inevitable that if God maintained the prerogative of his holiness, he must punish the sins that men have committed. How, then, should he save us? Behold the plan! His dear Son, the Lord of glory, takes upon himself human nature, comes into the place of as many as the Father gave him, stands in their standing, and when the sentence of justice had been proclaimed, and the sword of vengeance had leaped out of its scabbard, behold the glorious substitute bares his arm,

* From whence this fear and unbelief?

Hath not the Father put to grief

His spotless Son for thee?

And will the righteous judge of men,

Condemn me for that debt of sin,

Which, Lord, was charged on thee?

"Complete atonement thou hast made,

And to the utmost farthing paid

Whate'er thy people owed:

Nor can his wrath on me take place,

If sheltered in thy righteousness,

And sprinkled in thy blood."

and he says, "Strike, O sword, but strike *Me*, and let My people go." Into the very soul of Jesus, the sword of the law pierced, and his blood was shed, the blood, not of one who was man only, but of One who, by his being an eternal spirit, was able to offer up himself without spot unto God, in a way which gave infinite efficacy to his sufferings. He, through the eternal Spirit, we are told, offered himself without spot to God. Being in his own nature infinitely beyond the nature of man, comprehending all the natures of man as it were within himself, by reason of the majesty of his person, he was able to offer an atonement to God, of infinite, boundless, inconceivable sufficiency.

What our Lord suffered, none of us can tell. I am sure of this: I would not disparage or under-estimate his physical sufferings—the tortures he endured in his body—but I am equally sure that we can none of us exaggerate or over-value the sufferings of such a soul as his; they are beyond all conception. So pure and so perfect, so exquisitely sensitive, and so immaculately holy was he, that to be numbered with transgressors, to be smitten by his Father, to die (shall I say it?) the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers, was the very essence of bitterness, the consummation of anguish. "Yet it pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." His sorrows in themselves were what the Greek liturgy well calls them, "unknown sufferings, great griefs." Hence, too, their efficacy is boundless, without limit. Now, therefore, God is able to forgive sin. He has punished the sin on Christ; it becomes justice as well as mercy that God should blot out those debts which had been paid. It were unjust—I speak with reverence, but yet with holy boldness—it were unjust on the part of the infinite Majesty, to lay to my charge a single sin which was laid to the charge of my substitute. If my surety took my sin, he released me and I am clear. Who shall resuscitate judgment against me when I have been condemned in the person of my Saviour? Who shall

commit me to the flames of Gehenna, when Christ, my substitute, has suffered the tantamount of hell for me? Who shall lay any thing to my charge, when Christ has had all my crimes laid to his charge, answered for them, expiated them, and received the token of quittance from them, in that he was raised from the dead that he might openly vindicate that justification in which by grace I am called and privileged to share. This is all very simple, it lies in a nut-shell, but do we all receive it—have we all accepted it? Oh, my dear hearers, the text is full of warning to some of you. You may have an amiable disposition, an excellent character, a serious turn of mind, but you scruple at accepting Christ, you stumble at this stumbling-stone, you split on this rock. How can I meet your hapless case? I shall not reason with you. I forbear to enter into any argument. I ask you one question. Do you believe this Bible to be inspired of God? Look then at that passage, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” What say you? Is it not plain, absolute, conclusive? Allow me to draw the inference. If you have not an interest in the blood-shedding which I have briefly endeavored to describe, is there any remission for you? Can there be? Your own sins are on your head now. Of your hand shall they be demanded at the coming of the Great Judge. You may labor, you may toil, you may be sincere in your convictions and quiet in your conscience, or you may be tossed about with your scruples, but as the Lord liveth there is no pardon for you, except through this shedding of blood. Do you reject it? On your own head will lie the peril! God has spoken. It cannot be said that your ruin is designed by him, when your own remedy is revealed by him. He bids you take the way which he appoints, and if you reject it you must die. Your death is suicide, be it deliberate, accidental, or through error of judgment. Your blood beon your own head. You are warned.

On the other hand, what a far-reaching consolation the

text gives us ! “Without shedding of blood, there is no remission,” but where there is the blood-shedding, there is remission. If thou hast come to Christ, thou art saved. If thou canst say from thy very heart,—

“My faith doth lay her hand
On that dear head of thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And here confess my sin,”

then your sin is gone. Where is that young man? where is that young woman? where are those anxious hearts that have been saying: “We would be pardoned now?” Oh, look, look, look, look to the crucified Saviour, and you are pardoned. Ye may go your way, inasmuch as you have accepted God’s atonement. Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins which are many, are forgiven thee. Son, rejoice, for thy transgressions are blotted out.

My last word shall be this. You that are teachers of others and trying to do good, cleave fast to this doctrine. Let this be the front, the centre, the pith, and the marrow of all you have to testify. I often preach it, but there is never a Sabbath in which I go to my bed with such inward content as when I have preached the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Then I feel, “If sinners are lost I have none of their blood upon me.” This is the soul-saving doctrine, grip it and you shall have laid hold of eternal life: reject it, and you reject it to your confusion. Oh, keep to this. Martin Luther used to say that every sermon ought to have the doctrine of justification by faith in it. True; but let it have the doctrine of atonement in it. He says he could not get the doctrine of justification by faith into the Wurtemberger’s heads, and he felt half inclined to take the book into the pulpit and fling it at their heads in order to get it in. I am afraid he would not have succeeded if he had. But oh! how would I try to hammer again and again and again upon this one nail. “The blood is

the life thereof." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Christ giving up his life in pouring out his blood—it is this that gives pardon and peace to every one of you if you will but look to him—pardon now, complete pardon ; pardon for ever. Look away from all other confidences, and rely upon the sufferings and the death of the Incarnate God who has gone into the heavens, and who lives to-day to plead before his Father's throne, the merit of the blood which on Calvary he poured forth for sinners. As I shall meet you all in that great day when the Crucified One shall come as the King and Lord of all, which day is hastening on apace, as I shall meet you then, I pray you bear me witness that I have striven to tell you in all simplicity what is the way of salvation ; and if you reject it, do me this favor, to say that at least I have proffered to you in Jehovah's name this his Gospel, and have earnestly urged you to accept it that you may be saved. But the rather I would God that I might meet you there, all covered in the one atonement, clothed in the one righteousness, and accepted in the one Saviour, and then together will we sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his blood, to receive honor, and power, and dominion for ever and ever." **Amen.**

SERMON VIII.

FATHOMLESS.

"**THY JUDGMENTS ARE A GREAT DEEP.**"—Psalm xxxvi. 6.

CONSIDER the word "judgment" in whatever light you please, this sentence is true. There is much of mystery connected with the terrible calamities which afflict the earth, devastate nations, destroy cities, and sweep away the relics of the past. There is much of mystery about the judgments of God upon the wicked in this life—how they prosper for a while and are suddenly cut down; how they wax fat like oxen, and then are taken away to the shambles. The judgments of God regarding the wicked in the world to come are also "a great deep," not to be spoken of with levity. A solemn subject is that of the future punishment of the ungodly-- "a great deep," a deep where some, I am afraid, speculate so deeply that the risk they run is imminent—they may drown themselves in perdition.

But I prefer to-night to take the text as it may refer to *God's dealings with his own people*. He deals with them in judgment—not, I think, penally; he does not in their persons vindicate the inflexible justice of the law by the terrible vengeance he inflicts on the transgressor, as he will deal with the wicked at the last dread assize. I mean not that. I rather interpret it of the salutary discipline and painful chastisements of God's hand which are called "judgments," in Scripture. They do not come by chance, nor upon us as

all as a matter of sovereignty merely, but they are sent in wisdom, because God judges them to be necessary. They are weighed out to us with discretion; awarded us by prudence. It is a sweet name, I think, for affliction—not that I look upon affliction as a judgment upon me for sin, which I cannot do now that I have seen sin punished in Christ; but I look at my afflictions as being sent to me according to the all-wise judgment of a kind Father, not at all without consideration, but always according to his infinite wisdom and prudence, dealt out in measure and at proper times, according to the infinite judgment and wisdom of God. In a word, they are called “judgments,” not because they are judicial, but because they are judicious.

Now, these dealings of God with his servants, always wise and prudent, are frequently like great deeps. I shall simply this evening work out three or four thoughts which arise out of that metaphor.

I. THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE ARE OFTEN UNFATHOMABLE.

We cannot discover the foundation, or cause and spring of them. Some of God's servants who are earnestly desirous to provide things honest in the sight of all men, though they are industrious and energetic, and use proper prudence, do not find themselves able to prosper in trade. They are thwarted in all their purposes. There seems to be a kind of fatality connected with all their enterprises. If *they* do but touch a business or a bargain which will turn into gold with the traffic of others, it melts under their hand into dross. Now, it is not always that this can be explained. “Thy judgments are a great deep”—a matter to be perceived as a fact, but not to be explained by reasoning.

Sometimes in a family a dear child is born and is a great comfort to its parents. It seems, indeed, to be sent in love, to heal some old wound, and to make the house happy, and then just as suddenly as it came, it is removed. Why? Ah! here, again, is another deep which a mother's anxious

heart would like to fathom, but which is not for her to explore. It is a great deep.

Children will be spared to us, and just when they are ripening to manhood and womanhood, and we hope to see them settled and established in life, it happens—as it happened to one of our beloved friends in this church this afternoon—that we have to stand at the open grave and say, “Earth to earth, dust to dust.” Why God takes away the holy and the good, the amiable and the lovely, when they appear to be most useful, we cannot understand. It is a great deep.

Oftentimes, too, it happens that when a man is surrounded by his family, and all his household are dependent upon his exertions, with a business just beginning to prosper, while he bids fair to live for many years, he is cut down as in a moment; his wife is left a widow; his children are orphans. He seems to be taken away at the very worst time, just when he could least be spared. The anxious wife may say to herself, “Why is this?” but she can only say in return, “I cannot comprehend it; it is a great deep.”

I might thus go on recounting instances, but they have transpired before us all in our lifetime, and if they have not occurred to us yet they certainly will. Trials and troubles will come upon us quite beyond our measuring-line. We shall have to do business in deep waters where no plummet can by possibility find a bottom. “Thy judgments are a great deep.”

But why does the Lord send us an affliction which we cannot understand? I answer, *Because he is the Lord.* Your child must not expect to understand all his father does, because his father is a man of ripened intellect and understanding, and the child is but a child. You, dear brother, however experienced you may be, are but a child, and compared with the Divine mind, what intelligence have you? How can you expect, therefore, that God shall always act upon a rule which *you* shall be able to understand? He is God, and therefore it becometh us oftentimes to be dumb, to

sit in silence and to feel and know it must be right, though we equally know we cannot see how it is so.

God sendeth us trials of this sort *for the exercise of our graces*. Now is there *room for faith*. When thou canst trace him thou canst not trust him. If thou canst understand all that he does, there is room then for thy judgment rather than for thy faith and for thy reliance on his judgment. But when thou canst not understand it submit thyself to him, say, "I know that God is good; though he slay me yet will I trust in him: though I walk in darkness and see no light, yet shall not an unbelieving word cross these lips, for he is good, and must be good, become of me what may." Oh! then it is that faith is faith indeed, the faith that brings glory to God and strength to thy soul. Here is room, too, for *humility*. Knowledge puffeth up, but the feeling that every thing is beyond our knowledge, that we are nonplussed, and cannot understand the sense of ignorance and incapacity to understand the dealings of God, brings to us humility, and we sit down at the foot of Jehovah's throne. Beloved, I think there is hardly a grace which the Christian has which is not much helped by the deeps of God's judgments. Certainly love has frequently been developed to a high degree in this way, for the soul at last comes to say, "No, I will not ask the reason; I will not desire the reason; I do so love him; let his will stand for a reason; that shall be enough for me; it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." We love not those whom we are always bringing to book and questioning about all they do, but when love cometh to perfection it admireth all, it believeth all to be right and to be perfect. And so, when love cometh to perfection with reference to the most perfect God, then it is that every thing that is done is endorsed without examination; every thing, even though it be shrouded in darkness, is without a question believed in. It must be right, for thou, Lord, hast done it.

Many other reasons why God calls his people thus to

feel his judgments, occur to me ; one I may give, then I will leave this point. *We have sins which we cannot fathom*, dear brethren, and it is little marvel therefore if we have also chastisements which we cannot fathom. There are depths of depravity within our hearts that call for other deeps, as deep calleth unto deep, and there are consequences of sin within us which we are not able to reach, consequences that are following us in secret, and damaging us in very vital points. It needs that the medicine should be of a searching kind to follow the disease into the recesses of our soul, where understanding cannot pry. Some of those deep judgments are like secret, potent, subtle medicines, searching out certain secret devils that have found their way into the caverns of our spirit, and hidden themselves there. Perhaps an affliction which I can understand is meant to direct my attention to some known sin ; but it may be that the trial which I cannot understand, is dealing deadly blows against a mortal ill which, if not thus destroyed, might have been solemnly prejudicial to my own spirit.

I leave that thought with you—expect that God's judgments will sometimes be unfathomable.

II. In the next place—God's judgments are a great deep: THEN THEY ARE SAFE SAILING.

Ships never strike on rocks out in the great deeps. Children, perhaps, may fancy that a shallow sea is the safest, but an old sailor knows better. While he is off the Irish coast the captain has to keep a good look out, but while he is crossing the Atlantic he is in far less danger. There he has plenty of sea-room, and there is no fear of quicksands or of shoals. When the sailor enters the Thames he encounters first one sand bank and then another, and he is in danger, but out in the deep water, where he finds no bottom, he is but little afraid. So, mark you, in the judgments of God. When he is dealing out affliction to us it is the safest possible sailing that a Christian can have. "What," says one, "trial safe?" Yes, very safe. The safest part of a Chris-

tain's life is the time of his trial. "What, when a man is down do you say he is safe?" Yes, for then he need fear no fall; when he is low he need fear no pride; when he is humbled under God's hand then he is less likely to be carried away with every wind of temptation. Smooth water on the way to heaven is always a sign that the soul should keep wide awake, for danger is near. One comes at last to feel a solemn dread creeping over one in times of prosperity. "Thou shalt fear and tremble because of all the good that God shall make to pass before thee," fearing not so much lest the good should depart as lest we should make an ill use of it, and should have a canker of sloth, or self-confidence, or worldliness growing up in our spirits. We have seen many professed Christians make shipwreck, in some few instances it has been attributable to overwhelming sorrow, but in ten cases to the one it has been attributable to prosperity. Men grow rich, and of course they do not attend the little chapel they once went to; they must go where the fashionable world worships. Men grow rich, and straightway they cannot keep to that road of self-denial which once they so gladly trod. The world has made their hearts hungry as the wolf, and they rage for more. They have much, and they lust for more. An insatiable ambition has come over them, and they fall, and great is the sorrow which their fall brings to the church; great the mischief which it does to the people of God. But a man in trouble—did you ever notice a real child of God in trial? How he prays! He cannot live now without prayer; he has a burden to carry to his God, and he goes to the mercy-seat again and again. Notice him under depression of spirits. How he reads his Bible now. He does not care now for that lighter literature which beguiled many an hour before. He wants the solid promise, the strong meat of the kingdom of God. Do you notice now how he hears? That man does not care a fig for your flowers and your fine bits of rhetoric; he wants the Word; he wants the naked doctrine; he wants

Christ ; he cannot be fed on whims and fancies now. He cares a great deal less about theological speculation and ecclesiastical authority ; he wants to know something about eternal love, everlasting faithfulness, and the dealings of the Lord of Hosts with the souls of his people ; he pines to hear of the covenant, and of the suretyship engagements of Christ. Ah ! this is the man who walks tenderly in the world. He holds the world with a very loose hand. He expects to be often in the way, and hopes to be up out of the way, for the world has lost its attraction for him. I say, again, God's judgments are a great deep, but they are safe sailing, and under the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit they are not only safe but *they are advantageous*. I greatly question whether we ever do grow in purity much except when we are in the furnace. We ought so to do. The joys of this life with which God blesses us ought to make us increase in grace and gratitude, ought to be a sufficient motive for the very highest form of consecration, but as a rule we are only driven to Christ by a storm—the most of us, I mean. There are blessed and favored exceptions, but most of us need the rod, must have it, and do not seem to learn obedience except through the chastening of the Lord.

Here I leave that second thought.

III. Thirdly, God's judgments are a great deep, **BUT THEY CONCEAL GREAT TREASURE.**

Down in those awful depths who knows what there may be ? Pearls lie deep there—masses of precious things that would make the miser's eye gleam like a star. There are the wrecks of old Spanish galleons lost these centuries ago, and there they lie huge mines of wealth, far down “where sea-monsters whelp and stable.” And so with the deep judgments of God. What wisdom is concealed there, and what treasures of love and faithfulness, and what David calls “very tenderness,” “for in very tenderness,” saith he, “hast thou afflicted me.” There is as much wisdom in the deep

afflictions of God's saints, as in the creation of the world. God smites his people artistically. There is never a random blow. There is a marvellous degree of skill in the chastening of the Lord. Hence we are told not to despise it, which, in the strongest meaning of it, means that we are to honor it. We honor the chastisements of our parents, but infinitely more the chastisements of God. "For they verily chastened us for a few days after their own pleasure, but he for our profit," and he alone knows the way of chastening us for profit.

Now, brethren, I said there were treasures concealed in the great deeps which we cannot yet reach, and so in the great deeps in which God makes us to do business there are great treasures that we cannot come upon at present. We do not, perhaps, as yet, receive, or even perceive any present and immediate benefit from our afflictions. There may be no immediate benefit; the benefit may be far hence and to come. The chastening of our youth may be intended for the ripening of our age. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." The affliction of to-day may have no reference to the circumstances of to-day, but to the circumstances of fifty years ahead. I do not know that yonder blade required the rain on such a day, but God was looking not to February as such, but to February in its relation to July, when the harvest should be reaped. He considered the blade not merely as a blade, and in its present necessity, but as it would be in the full corn in the ear. There are certain marks that an artist makes upon the block that you cannot see the reason of as yet, and they spoil the apparent likeness of the marble to the image which you know he wishes to produce, but then those lines are to be worked out by and by. They are scratches now, but they will be lines of beauty soon when he comes to conclude them. So, a trial may even lame us for present service, damage us—I will even go to the length of saying—for years to come, and make us go groaning and broken-heart-

ed, so as to be of comparatively little service to the Church, and of very little joy to ourselves. But then afterwards—"afterwards," as Paul puts it—it beareth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, in those that are exercised thereby. Why will you not let the Lord have time? Why will you be in a hurry? Why will you stand at his elbow and perpetually say, "Explain this to-day, and show me the motive and reason of this at the present hour"? A thousand years in his sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. The mighty God takes mighty time in which to work out his grand results; therefore be content to let the treasures lie at the bottom of the deep for a while. But then faith may see them. Faith can make the deep translucent till it sees the treasure lying there; and she assures you it is yours, and though you may not at this hour be able to be at it, yet you shall have it, "for all things are yours." Every thing that is stored up in the great deep of the eternal purpose, or in the deep of the manifest judgment, every thing belongs to you, O believer. Therefore rejoice in it, and let it lie there till such a time as God may choose to raise it for your spiritual enrichment.

IV. God's judgments are a great deep; THEN THEY WORK MUCH GOOD.

The great deep, though ignorance thinks it to be all waste, a salt and barren wilderness, is fraught with the greatest blessings to this round world. If, to-morrow, there should be "no more sea," although that may one day be a blessing, it would not be so to-day, but the greatest of all curses. It is from the sea that there arises the perpetual mist which, floating by-and-by in mid-air, at last descends in plenteous showers on hill and vale to fertilize the land. The sea is the great heart of the earth—I might say the circulating blood of the world. We must have it; it must be in motion; its tides, like a great pulse, must be felt, or the world's vitality would cease. There is no waste in the

sea; it is all wanted; there is not a drop too much of it. So with our afflictions which are thy judgments, O God! They are necessary to our life, to our soul's health, to our spiritual vigor. "By all these," said one of old, "do men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit." Uprising from my trouble is the constant mist which is afterwards transformed into sacred dew, which moistens my life. 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted,' said David. "Amen!" say all the afflicted ones. A thousand sick beds shall bear witness to the blessedness of the trial. A thousand losses and crosses borne by the faithful, now aid the sweetness of the harmony of everlasting hymns in the land of the blessed. "Oh! blessed cross," said one; "I fear lest I should come to love thee too much; 'tis so good to be afflicted!" May God grant to us that at all times instead of trying to fathom the deep, we may understand that it is useful to us, and be content.

V. Lastly: if God's judgments are a great deep, THEN THEY BECOME A HIGHWAY OF COMMUNION WITH HIMSELF.

We thought at one time that the deep separated different peoples; that nations were kept asunder by the sea; but lo! the sea is to-day the great highway of the world. The rapid ships cross it with their white sails, or with their palpitating engines they flash across the waves. The sea is the world's great canal—a mighty channel of communication. And so, brethren, our afflictions—which we thought in our ignorance would separate us from our God—are the highway by which we may come nearer to God than we otherwise could. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business on the great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep." You that keep close in shore and have but small trials, you are not likely to know much of his wonders in the deep; but if you are made to put out far to sea, where deep calleth unto deep and the noise of God's waterspouts astounds the spiritual

mariner, then it is that you shall see God's wonders—wonders of faithfulness, wonders of power, wonders of wisdom, wonders of love. You shall see them, and you shall rejoice to see them. These troubles shall be as fiery chariots to bear you up to God. Your afflictions, wave upon wave, shall wash your soul, like a tempest-tossed bark, nearer to the haven. Oh! but this is a blessed thing when God's judgments bring us nearer to him! Old Quarles has a quaint idea when he represents God as swinging a flail in judgment, and he says if you would get away from it you must get close to his hands, and then you are out of the reach of the swing of the blow. Get close up to God, and he will not smite; get near to God and the trial ceases.

Trials are often weights to keep men down, but you have seen many a machine in which one weight going down lifts another weight up, and there is a way by faith of adjusting the consecrated pulleys so that the very weight of your affliction may lift you up nearer to God. The bird with a string and a stone to its feet cannot fly, and yet there is a way that God has of making his birds fly even when they are tied to the ground. They never mounted till they had something to pull them down; never ascended till they were compelled to descend. They found the gates of heaven not up there, but down there. The lower they sank in self-estimation, the nearer they came to the everlasting God who is the foundation of all things.

Thus, brethren, I have brought you to the last thought, may the Holy Spirit bring you to make it your own. May God's deep judgments lead you to deeper communion.

Dear child of God, thou that art in trouble to-night, the voice of that trouble is to thee—get nearer to God; get nearer to God. God has favored you, favored you with an extraordinary means of growth in grace. To use Rutherford's simile, he has put you down in the wine-cellar in the dark. Now begin to tap the wines on the lees well-refined. Now get at the choice treasures of darkness. He has

brought you on to a sandy desert; now seek the treasures that are hid in the sand. Believe that the deepest afflictions are neighbors always to the highest joys, and that the greatest possible privileges lie close by the darkest trials. If the bitterer your sorrow, the louder your song at the last, there is a reason for that, and that reason faith may discover and experience live upon.

May God bless the tried ones among you. But there are some here who are in trial and have no God to go to. Poor souls! Poor souls! Poverty, and no God! Sick-ness, and no God! A life of toil, and no heaven! A slavery of penury on earth, and then driven for ever away from God's presence! Oh! how pitiable! how pitiable! Pity yourselves, and remember that it need not always be so. You may have a heaven, you may have present bliss. Here is the Gospel—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Oh! my hearer, if thou canst but trust him who bled upon the cross, thou shalt have comfort for thy present trouble; thou shalt have pardon for thy past, present, and future sin. The Lord bless each one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON IX.

MEAT INDEED AND DRINK INDEED. *C. O. 16*

"FOR MY FLESH IS MEAT INDEED, AND MY BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED."—
John vi. 55.

THE crowd had followed Jesus for the loaves and fishes. He gently upbraids them for being guided by so carnal an appetite, and impelled by so coarse a motive to follow him. Then he tells them that there is a spiritual meat which is far better—a spiritual drink far richer than those aliments which nourish the body and gratify the animal tastes. After which, speaking of himself spiritually, he says—"My flesh is meat indeed"—real meat, such as supports the soul; and "My blood is drink indeed"—real drink, the best, the truest beverage, such as invigorates the spirit for immortality.

Why, you may ask, at the outset, does our Lord speak of his flesh and blood as separated? I tried to explain that a few evenings ago when we gathered around this table. There must be in the Lord's Supper bread and wine; but bread separated from the wine, as our Lord speaks of his flesh as separate from his blood, and this was to indicate that it is as a dying Saviour that he is most precious to us. The blood separated from the flesh indicates death. It is to the death of Jesus that the believer first turns his eye, and it is when considering the living, reigning Christ as having once been slain that our richest comfort comes to us. So, it is not an unnecessary multiplication of words, or a vain repetition of the same idea, when our Lord says to us—"My

flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." He thereby denotes himself as the dying Christ.

I. Taking the words as they stand, our first point will be that THE FLESH OF CHRIST IS MEAT INDEED—SPIRITUAL MEAT.

The likeness is emphatic; it is "meat indeed." It is like meat because meat, or food, sustains the body. The body could not be kept in vigor ordinarily, or without a miracle, except by the use of food. We pine, we languish, we sicken, we die without bread. So the soul without Jesus, supposing it to be alive, must soon sicken, pine, be famished, and decay. You, O believer, with all your strength, would be weak as water at this moment if Jesus were not now your present support. All your past experience would go for nothing if you had not now a present Christ to stay your hopes upon. It would be only a matter of time with you; you would ere long sink into the corruption of an open apostasy. Like a man shut up in a dungeon and deprived of food, who drags out for a few days a most painful existence, and, at the last, expires, and becomes carrion, so must it be with you. Unless Jesus Christ be your daily meat you will go back to the carnal elements of the world, and become corrupt and depraved as others are. Christ is the only true sustenance of the quickened soul. But, mark you, let a man eat what meat he may, it does not always so sustain him but that he is sometimes weak and stretched upon the bed of languishing; and it cannot so sustain him but that ere long he must be carried to his grave: but if your souls learn to feed on Jesus, they shall enjoy the blessed immunity promised to the inhabitants of Zion; they shall not say, "I am sick;" they shall never die; they shall feed on immortal bread such as angels eat. You shall be carried up to the seats of the immortals to dwell forever with the Christ upon whom you have fed, coming to him first to appease your hunger, and believing on him continuously to sustain your life.

Meat not only provides sustentation, but it *assists growth*. The child cannot develop into a man if he be denied his daily food ; he must certainly die in infancy or in childhood if he is without the nutriment which is requisite to the building up of his bodily frame. Now, brethren and sisters, we are babes in grace many of us. We have been brought to Jesus' feet, and as such, we are of those who make up his kingdom ; but we want to grow into spiritual manhood. We are not content with little faith, and dim hope, and a spark of love. We want to become perfectly developed men, strong in the fulness of spiritual energy, and this can only be by Christ. Only can you grow as you increase in the knowledge of him, and in subjection to the influences of his indwelling Spirit. As food makes our bodies grow, so Christ is food to our souls, he is "meat indeed," for he makes us grow after a Divine sort. Let a man feed upon what other meat he may, he shall not come unto perfection, but let him feed on Jesus and he shall ; through the grace of God in Christ Jesus he shall yet come to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ. Up yonder they are all men in Christ. Before the throne they are all perfect and altogether complete, and this because they have fed upon this sacred meat which makes them grow until they have come unto the perfect image of him they fed upon.

Meat does not only sustain and cause growth, *but it makes up for the daily waste of the body*. Some people forget that every exertion of the body wears it away as truly as the machine spends its fuel and wastes itself. As even an engine of iron needs repair, so does this body of ours, and the meat we feed upon goes to repair the daily waste to which bone, and muscle, and nerve, are subjected. Beloved, Jesus Christ in this sense is meat. "He restoreth my soul." He makes up for the waste of temptation, for the wear and tear of care, for the fret of trouble, for the fume and flurry of manifold anxieties, for every thing that would waste a man away. My soul once again renews her strength, like

the eagle, when she sips from the brook that flows from the foot of the cross. Oh! believer, you will soon degenerate, this world of sin will soon make you backslide, and lose every good thing you have, unless you go to Christ continually, and feed on him. But feeding on him the world shall not hurt you; temptations shall not wound you; your trials shall not overwhelm you, for you shall find his flesh to be meat indeed. The best meat that man's body can receive will not always repair the waste. After a certain period of life the body must decay, and the most nutritious diet cannot prevent the hair, the teeth, the eyes, the legs, the arms, the entire man, from discovering that the hour of prime has past, and that the time of decay has arrived. Bend must the man and lean upon his staff, and eat or drink what he will according to the strictest diet and regimen of the physician, yet still the time of waste has come. They that look out of the windows shall be darkened; the grinders shall fail because they are few, and the pillars of the house shall tremble. But, beloved, *his* flesh is "meat indeed," and they that feed upon him "shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright." Their last days shall be their best days, instead of declining they shall gather strength with multiplying years till the moment when heart and flesh shall fail, and then shall the strength of their souls and their portion forever be most fully revealed to them.

Moreover, *meat is a great remover of pain and disease.* Without food of some kind, a man's inward constitution becomes full of gnawing and anguish. Bitter are the gripings of hunger. Perhaps no pain can be more severe when a man is long exposed to it, than hunger, with the exception of thirst. No doubt want is the root of multitudes of the diseases of the poor. Generous diet often does more for the sick than the best medical prescriptions. It is certainly so with believers in Christ. His flesh is meat indeed in this respect. The pains of conviction, the throbbings of a guilty

conscience, all are stayed when a man receives Christ into his inward parts. If a man be spiritually sick with worldliness, with doubt, with pride, with envy, with any thing that is the common sickness of the child of God, let him get but a hearty feast upon the flesh of Jesus, and the disease will fly. Christ puts such vigor into the spiritual system of his own people when they feed on him, that they eject diseases as strong men cast them off by the force of their constitution. Blessed and happy is he who eats this flesh, for it is in this sense meat indeed.

Once more, meat is used constantly by us *for the development of strength.* The man ill-fed cannot lift the weight that another can who enjoys more generous diet. Lowness of food brings littleness of strength. Now Jesus Christ is the only food that can make his people strong for service. Feed on him and ye shall run and not be weary, ye shall walk and not faint. He is meat indeed; because he gives us a strength that is all but boundless. He, when we feed on him, clothes a mortal man with the might of God. The feeblest Christian in the Church, when he has fed upon Christ, becomes a giant to suffer or to do.

I cannot enlarge upon all these points, though there is enough in any one of them for a discourse, but, dear child of God, seek after Christ, and be not satisfied until daily you are fed and nourished upon him.

The word "*indeed*" gives the sentence an air of strong protest. We must take this into consideration. Why does he say that his flesh is meat "*indeed*?" *It is in opposition to mere animal and corporeal food,* which is meat, but not meat "*indeed*." You think that bread is solid nutriment. So it is, speaking one way, but what does it support? It supports the body, and the body you say, is substantial. So indeed it is to the eye and to the touch; but what is the body? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away; surely the people are grass." This body is

so little a while here, and so soon dissolved, that I may safely call it but a shadow; and the food that feeds the shadow cannot itself be more than a shade. And what is the soul within us? Why, that you say is unreal. Truly so, sirs, to smell, to sight, to touch; but not in fact, and in the judgment of truth. The real thing about a man is his inward self, which you cannot see—his secret, impalpable, unseen, immortal self. Time's tooth does not touch it, nor does the scythe of Death cut it down. The soul is the real man, not the body; and, sirs, the food which feeds the soul is the real food after all, and we know it though the men of the world turn on their heel and say, "Ah! no, the bread and cheese, the flesh and wine, these are real; give us plenty of these." Sirs, such feed the shadow; but the truth you give your souls to feed upon, that it is which in God's sight, in the sight of wise men, and in your sight if you have any spiritual discernment, is meat indeed.

It is meat indeed, in contrast with the typical meats of the Old Testament. There was the Paschal Supper—surely that was a glorious feast, when after it the people went their way out of Egypt rejoicing. Yes, but 'twas only a deliverance from a common temporal slavery; but they that eat the Paschal Lamb are delivered from the bondage of death and hell, for his flesh is meat indeed. In the wilderness they ate the manna. Yes, but every day it seemed to tell them its own unsubstantial character, from the fact that if they kept it till the next morning it bred worms and stank. But our Lord Jesus Christ is food that never corrupts. Feed on him, lay him up in your hearts, and you shall find no corruption there. In the old tabernacle and the temple there were the loaves of shew-bread, and these were meat for the priest. Ah! but the shew-bread was nothing but a type; and to the priest, however devoutly he might receive it, the shew-bread, in itself, was no food for his real self, but only for his corporeal frame. And I may say the same of the bread which we have upon the table here to-night at communion; there is nothing

in it ; it is a mere emblem and a sign. But Christ's flesh is meat indeed. When I have sometimes seen this text put over the table commonly used for what is called the "Sacrament" I have trembled lest people should be led into the grievous and unnatural error of transubstantiation. When our Lord said, "My flesh is meat indeed," he could not mean that bread on the table, for the Lord's Supper was not then instituted. In this particular text, at any rate, there can be no allusion of any kind to what is called "the Mass" by some, or by others styled "the Sacrament," because the Lord's Supper was not brought forward by our Lord until within a few hours of his death, and he is now speaking months before that time. Beloved, the bread is bread, and nothing but bread, and so far as it points you, like a sign-post, to the real flesh of Christ, so far so good. If you stop there, I can only say of it that this bread is meat, but the flesh of Christ is meat indeed.

When our Lord says, "My flesh is meat *indeed*," he clearly distinguishes it from every other kind of soul-meat. There are many sorts of soul-meat. Some men feed their souls on their own doings. "Oh !" say they, "we have prayed ; we have fasted ; we have given to the poor ; we have been upright ; we have been righteous ;" and their soul feeds on that, though it is all wind. But if they trusted Christ it would be meat indeed. Some feed on ceremonies. They have been baptized, christened, confirmed, and I know not what besides. Fine confectionery this, but it is all wind. Christ received into the soul, and trusted in for salvation, is meat indeed. Some have grown up upon false doctrines, or upon true ones exaggerated, and these bring them to a very fine developement of self-conceit and bigotry, but they make no solid food for the mind. But, oh ! beloved, when a man can say, "My hope is in the Crucified alone ; I look to him every day ; my meditations are on him ; my reading is much about him ; my prayers are all sent to heaven through him ; my praises are for him ; he is my soul's joy, comfort, strength,

and help," then he has the meat indeed ; he will be a strong man, a holy man, a happy man, a heavenly man, and by and by he shall be caught up to dwell where Jesus is, on whom he has fed.

I hope I have made this clear. It is thinking upon Jesus, trusting in Jesus, that is the eating, Jesus himself being the food. Those who trust in him and rest in him have the best of soul-meat. They have meat indeed.

II. CHRIST'S BLOOD IS DRINK INDEED.

Like drink to the body, the blood of Jesus, that is to say, the merits of his atoning sacrifice, *sustains*. The body is not to be built up without some liquid ; the system needs it. The soul is not to be sustained without considering and resting on the substitutionary suffering of Jesus. That Jesus died in my stead and suffered for my sin stimulates my hope, my comfort, my joy ; in a word, my whole soul, just as drink invigorates the physical system.

Drink *refreshes* the body. The traveller is faint ; it is a hot, burning day. That cool brook—how different the man looks when he laves his face in it, and drinks a sweet, cooling draught ; and so the blood of Jesus refreshes the man who trusts in it. If I trust that Jesus was punished for me, and I am clear that Jesus died for me, how my soul seems to have gained a new life, how it revives. Though he were dead, yet should he live who could believe in this. Though despair held a man in a fainting-fit so that he could not stir hand or foot, yet if this precious doctrine of a Saviour dying for him were believed by him, his heart and his spirit must revive at once.

Drink also *cleanses the body*. I do not mean washing, but that the reception of the water into the system flushes all the various departments of the frame, and no doubt the liquid always has upon the human body a healthy influence unless it be taken, whatever it may be, intemperately. It is, to a great extent, made life-fluid of the system. Now, whenever

you get Jesus Christ into the soul, he purifies the spiritual veins right if the blood be wrong ! He removes all impurities from the spiritual system ; and the more really you come to rest upon a bleeding Christ, the more sure you are to get rid of your reigning and besetting sins, for we overcome them through the blood of the Lamb. Christ's blood is thus drink indeed.

Drink also *cheers the man*. How many a faint heart has been cheered when the cooling draught has been brought ; the fainting one has opened her eyes, and smiled. And, oh ! how the thoughts of a dying Christ revive the fainting soul, and make the spirit sing that once was ready to moan and cry : " I am forgotten ; I am forsaken ; I am lost."

Notice the word "*indeed*," for it occurs again : " My blood is drink indeed," *in opposition to all carnal drink*, for as I said about the food, that it is but a shadow to support a shadow, so it is with the drink—it is but a shade to support a shade. Christ's blood supports the spirit, therefore it is drink indeed.

How superior to *all typical drinks* ! There was the water which flowed from the rock when it was smitten ; there were the various drinks with the meat-offerings, but Jesus Christ is the fulness of which these were but the shadows.

Christ says, " My blood is drink indeed," as though utterly ignoring *all other soul-drink*. Some men drink until they are drenched with earthly pleasure. Others drink until they are inflated with their own self-righteousness. The devil has his cups, and he knows how to fill them to the brim, and make them sparkle and fascinate the eye. But let men's souls drink of these draughts till they come to the dregs, they shall never be satisfied, and in the world to come their misery shall be greater if they have had any satisfaction here. But oh ! if your soul can get to the precious blood of Christ and rest there, and you can rejoice that Jesus died for you, you may drink, but you shall never be inebriated ; you may drink, but you shall never know satiety ; you may drink, and you

shall possess a satisfaction which nothing can destroy, which neither time nor habit can cause to pall on your palate, and of which eternity shall be but a blessed prolongation. Drink, thirsty soul, drink at the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and thou shalt thirst no more, but cry, "I have enough ; I have found in Jesus' atoning blood all that my soul can want."

III. Put these two things together. It appears, according to the text, that OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS BOTH MEAT AND DRINK TOGETHER.

So, I would have you notice *the suitability of Jesus Christ to man's wants*. Man wants meat and drink. Jesus is what man wants. You need pardon : you have it in Christ. You want life, eternal life : you have it in Christ. You want peace, comfort, happiness : you have all in Christ. No key ever fitted a lock so well as Christ fits a sinner. You are empty : Christ is full. You cannot have a want that he cannot supply. As Giles Fletcher pithily says:—

"Christ is a path, if any be misled ;
 He is a robe, if any naked be ;
 If any chance to hunger, he is bread,
 If any be a bondman, he is free ;
 If any be but weak, how strong is he !
 To dead men life he is, to sick men, health ;
 To blind men, sight ; and to the needy, wealth ;
 A pleasure without loss, a treasure without stealth."

There never was, and there never will be, a repenting soul that was beyond the saving power of Jesus. What a suitable Saviour he is to me ! That I can say, for if Jesus Christ had been sent into this world for me only, he could not have suited me better than he does ; and if he had been sent for you only, poor trembling sinner, he could not have fitted you better than he will. Why, when I think of Jesus he seems to be all mine, and I am sure I cannot afford to do without a bit of him. I want him altogether, and he just exactly fills my soul up to the brim ; and you shall

each find it is so to yourself. He will be your meat and your drink, and if you get him you will say:—

“All my capacious powers can wish,
In thee doth richly meet ;
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”

If Jesus Christ be thus meat and drink together, *what fulness* there is in him ! He is not only one out of two good things, but he is both. A man with meat would die, let him have as much as he pleased of it, if there were nothing to drink ; a man with drink would die, if there were nothing solid for him to eat. Jesus does not give us part of salvation, but he gives us all of it. You shall find in Jesus Christ every thing that will be wanted between hell and heaven. All the way, from the bars of Tophet to the pearly gates of paradise every want of every pilgrim is met in him. Ten thousand times ten thousand as his people are, yet all of them receive all that they want from him, for “it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” “All fulness”—mark the word. “Fulness” is a wide word, but “all” fulness is wider, and all fulness dwells in him,—that is, it is remaining in him, always fulness and always remaining all fulness ; that is the greatest word of all. He is both meat and drink ; he is all that we want.

Consider, too, that if Christ be both meat and drink, *what need we have of him !* because there is no need in the world, I suppose, that is greater than the need of meat and drink. You hear the shout of “Fire !” in the street, and it startles you ; but those who have ever heard the cry of “Bread !” in a bread riot, say that the alarm of “Fire !” is nothing to it. There is something so sharp, so awful, so determined, so ferocious, so like the yell of wild beasts, about men and women that scream for bread, that it is the most awful of sounds. And “Drink !” What a word that must be for a number of poor wretches shut up as they were in

the Black Hole of Calcutta, raving through those little windows at the guard outside for drink ; and stretching out their hands and beseeching them to turn their carbines upon them, and shoot them, rather than let them die there a lingering death of suffocation and of thirst ! How when a little water was passed in they fought and struggled for it, if so be a man might but get a drop, or suck a handkerchief that had been dipped into it, and linger on a little longer. Now, nobody can have a greater need than an actual want of bread and want of water ; but that is what you want, my dear friends who are without Christ ; your soul wants bread and water. Think not that you are rich and increased in goods if you have not Christ, for in truth you are naked, and poor, and miserable. If you do not trust him, love him, serve him, your poor soul has not even a drop to drink. What can it do but die ? And oh ! what must be its wretchedness when your soul shall ask for a drop of water to cool its tongue, tormented in that flame ? While others are feasting you shall have the gnashing of your hungry teeth to be your endless portion. God grant you may not be so cruel to your souls as to starve them by going without Christ !

Ay, and if Christ be meat and drink, what need there is of a real reception of him. If you get meat and drink, you cannot make use of them unless you eat and drink them. Take meat to a hungry man ; hold it out on your hand and ask him, "Don't you feel better ?" "No," saith he. "Look at it, man ; look at it." "No, I feel more hungry." "But cut it ; here is the knife." "Oh !" saith he, "what is the use of that ? You mock me ; I want to get it between my teeth ; I want to get it worked into my system, or else it is of no avail." Hearer, of what service is it to you that you come and listen, Sunday after Sunday, but never decide to trust Christ, and take him into your soul ? You hear me pour out the water, but you do not drink. You see it sparkle as I speak of it, but you do not receive it. What is the good of it to you ? Oh ! you will perish, you will perish

with the bread within your reach ; with the clear brook of eternal life flowing at your feet. Why this folly ! You act not so in other things. Men are not satisfied with seeing gold ; they want to take it home and put it in their pockets, and how is it that they are content with hearing about Christ,—with talking about Christ,—but never ask for real faith, and for vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ ? See to this, I pray you ; and see to it soon, or death will see to you.

Moreover, if Jesus Christ be both meat and drink, beloved in the Lord—I speak to you now—*what reason there is for giving thanks !* I said in the reading that a man is very unmannerly, very beast-like, who sits down to his meat and his drink without thanks. Well, then, my soul, whenever thou comest to feed on Christ—whenever thou thinkest on him—and that shouldst thou do always—always give thanks. The true spirit of a Christian is perpetual thankfulness. I like the remark of a dear friend who is present now, who, when the November fogs began, said to me on a Sunday morning, “I tell all my family to be more cheerful than ever now the dreary weather has come, so as to shake off the dulness around us by keeping up cheerfulness within.” Now, you are always feeding on Christ, and so every time you feed you ought to give thanks ; “rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice.” They used to call this Supper, in the ancient church, “the Eucharist”—the giving of thanks. Well, let the life of the Christian be a constant Eucharist, and as he feeds on Jesus always, let him always offer this tribute of praise—“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

Yea, and if Jesus Christ be meat and drink, then *here is a reason why you Christians should be very earnest to tell of him to others—to hand him out.* Oh ! if we had this house full of bread to-night, and there were a famine all over London, in the East End, the West End, and the North and the South, and men were dropping down dead in the streets,

and they were crowding outside there, out at the Elephant and Castle, and down Newington-causeway, I know what I should say, if the bread belonged to me : “ Brethren and sisters, come and help me. Out of the windows with it ! Let the hungry creatures come in at every door ; let them crowd t every window ; and let them eat to the full. And if they were thirsty, and we had the mains laid on here, and there was no water to be had anywhere else, oh ! I am sure there is not a little child here but would be glad to take his little tin can and hand out a draught of water to the thirsty people. Well, you then, with little abilities, who love Christ—tell about him to others. He is meat and drink to the famishing and thirsty ones. If he were merely a dainty, I would not press it ; but as he is a necessity to the dying sons of men, tell them about him, and if they despise him, well then you have done your part ; but if they perish without your telling them of Christ, their blood may lie at your door. Bethink you, while you are going home to-night, walking down the streets, whether there is any house you pass where there is a man living who can charge you with having neglected him. Do not let it be so any longer, but seek that, as his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, you may hand out Jesus Christ to the famishing crowds, that they may be satisfied.

The Lord bless you richly, for his name's sake.

SERMON X.

THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.

“THE FRUIT OF THEIR THOUGHTS.”—Jer. vi. 19.

Do you observe here, my brethren, how God declares that he would not only punish Israel for gross, overt acts of sin, but that he would also bring upon the nation terrible chastisements for her thoughts?—a solemn warning, full of instruction to us.

It has almost passed into a proverb, that “thought is free.” Whether this is true or false, an axiom or a solecism, must depend on the sphere in which thought moves. It is true in the sense of thought being free before men, since none of us can judge our neighbor’s thoughts, nor have we any right to attempt the task. Religious opinion, for instance, is not a thing of which the law can justly take cognizance. As far as the civil government is concerned, whether a man’s sentiments be those of a Christian or an idolater, a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Mormonite, he is entitled to all civil rights. Be he who he may, he is oppressed if he be deprived of his liberty, or of any privilege, because of his opinions. Be he who he may, he is injured if any one sect be rendered dominant, or be supported by a forced taxation drawn from the whole. Thought must be free, and it shall be, by God’s help, perfectly free as between man and man: we will never cease to wage war until it is so. Whatever tyrants may decree, they have never yet been able to stop the progress of opinion. Though they have crowded all their prisons, and worn out their

racks, they have never been able to turn a gracious man from a truth which he has embraced, nor, I may add, have they been able to confirm a wavering man in the falsehood which they have tried to thrust upon him. Thought, in that sense, is free by natural right.

Yet there is another side to the same question, by reason of which we are bound to make this solemn protest—thought is not free from before God. I have no more authority to think of God as I please, than I have to act before him as I please; in either case the charge of licentiousness would lay against me; for the God who is supreme over the outward actions of my body, is likewise the only Lord and Governor of the inward motions of my spirit. All the provinces of the little isle of Man belong to God, the great Governor. Over body, soul and spirit, he is Legislator and Lord.

That thought in this sense is not free is to be proved very clearly, *for some of the commandments of God contained in the decalogue, particularly relate to thought*; such, for instance, as, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife,” and so on. That command is clearly, particularly, and peculiarly one relating to thought; God’s law, therefore, takes cognizance of thought. Moreover, we know that inspiration has taught us in the one hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm, that the Lord *is constantly watching our thoughts*. He knows them before they are known to us. “Thou understandest my thought afar off.” To what end, think ye, does God watch our thoughts, but with this view, to bring us into judgment at the last great day, for every idle word, and for every idle imagination and thought of our hearts? And, my brethren, we have it upon record that God not only puts the law to work upon our thoughts, and watches our thoughts, but that *he is also angry on account of evil thoughts*. Need I remind you of those remarkable words in the 6th chapter of Genesis: “God saw that the wickedness

of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Do not, therefore, make light of evil thoughts. If your conscience be awakened, truly awakened, you never will. A steeled and seared conscience may look upon them with indifference; those whose hearts are not right towards God, may sneer at the idea of any evil consequence coming from what they simply turn over in their minds; but if you have a tender heart, if God has been pleased to take the horniness and callousness from off your conscience, and to make it sensitive, you will say at once, "Oh, save my soul from base and wicked thoughts!" Then may your emotion be like that of David when he said, "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

That thoughts are of the utmost importance, may likewise be inferred from the fact that *God makes them here the ground of punishing his people*. He speaks of the fruit of their thoughts. That which bears fruit must need have some ulterior importance. The thought in itself may not be a very great thing, but what will it come to? It may be even a very little thing, but what will be the end thereof? Thoughts of evil *are in themselves evil thoughts*. It is questionable whether we can even read the report of our neighbor's sin without producing some sinful thoughts in ourselves. It is debateable whether a person can have much to do with speaking or hearing of the offences of others, without in some degree defiling himself; for as pitch sticks, and soot and things black and dirty, defile one by the slightest contact, so doth sin in any shape defile by passing over the mind. Touched by the hand it might scarcely leave any discernible mark behind; but there is a distinct impression left upon the mind; so that every picture of evil which passes through the soul, remains there

to do that soul injury. The thought of evil is in itself sin.

And, what is more, *the thought of evil paralyzes the finer faculties of the soul*. The more we think of sin and become familiar with it, the less terrible does it become to our apprehension. I am sure this is the result when men habituate their reveries to any form of evil. Could the minds of men who have become murderers be analyzed, I doubt not it would be found that they had been a long time in schooling themselves to the commission of the horrible crime. They have thought upon it, meditated and deliberated about it, until at last it has seemed to them but a mere trifle and then they have gone forth to do it without misgiving.

I do not believe that a man becomes a villain all at once. He puts his soul to school, his thoughts are his teachers, or rather they are the school-books in which his soul reads; and at last he becomes capable of transacting the deeds of a scoundrel. If you think long upon any sin, the chances are that, as soon as the temptation to that sin comes, you will commit it. I have known persons produce a monomania by constant brooding upon one object. I did once know a man who was constantly apprehensive that he was being poisoned by people; and I always stood in trepidation for that man, lest he should poison himself. If you will harbor the thought—if you will ruminate on any sin, turn it over, and advise with it on your pillow; your affability will disarm your fear; and the traitor you have harbored will betray you before your suspicions are aroused. Beware, then, of all thoughts of sin. If you show a thief all the locks and bolts and bars in your house, and tell him how the cellar-window could be opened, or the back-door lock be made to give way, do not be surprised if, one of these nights, you should find all your goods stolen. If you introduce these evil thoughts into your habitation, you cannot wonder at the consequence, however startled your friends may be at the detection.

It is certain that thoughts are the eggs of sin. These are the embryos out of which sins spring—the spawn from which every form of iniquity is developed. We hear sometimes of fever-lairs and pest-dens. Evil thoughts are just these. They are the jungles where the monsters of sin multiply and fatten. Thoughts of sin are dark woods harboring all kinds of evil; they are birds of prey destroying all sorts of good.

Therefore, as God takes cognizance of our thoughts, let us be mindful of the responsibility they entail upon us. Let us no longer despise them, but look into the nursery where they are reared, and begin to search our hearts, and to judge ourselves as in the sight of Him that searcheth the reins.

I. BAD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT exhibit a very large variety. I shall, however, but refer you to the 20th chapter of the Book of Exodus, where the Ten Commandments will help us to a list of thoughts, all of which are horribly mischievous.

The first command which God gives to us is:—“*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*” That is, in fact, “Thou shalt have no other God but Me,” since God is everywhere. This precept is easily broken in the thoughts. If I say to myself, “This is God’s law, but the contrary action will be most to my profit,” then I make myself, or my money, my God. If on any occasion I say within myself, “I clearly perceive that I ought not to indulge in that sin, but then it will give me great pleasure;” should I still indulge in it, then I make pleasure my God—that is to say, myself. I worship myself instead of God. This is a sin the essence of which must lie in the thoughts, in the judgment, in the affections. You need not make an image of gold, or of wood, and bow down before it. You can become a thorough-paced idolater in the temple of your heart by offering homage to your own self-will.

The second commandment contains a further prohibi-

tion, "*Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image,*" and so on. That is, "Thou shalt not worship God under any symbol ; thou shalt not worship God through any symbol ;" or, in spirit, "Thou shalt not worship God in any way which God has not commanded ;" "Thou shalt not invent to thyself methods and modes of worship, but thou shalt do as God commands thee." Now, we can very easily, in our thoughts, fabricate an image. This is what we most of us do. We say and think that God is altogether such a one as we are ; and, having formed to ourselves an idea of God, we bow down before *it*, and say, "These be thy gods, O Israel !" Brethren, you may be as much an idolater by worshipping a god whom your fancy has made as by worshipping a block of stone. That incomprehensible One, who has proclaimed himself in Scripture according to the mysterious attributes of his Being, and has further revealed himself in the person of the Lord Jesus so sweetly and gloriously—this is the God we must worship. We must not make a god but take the God whom the Scripture reveals. We are not to fashion in our thoughts a God such as we should like him to be—a God who is pure benevolence, but who has no justice ; but we must take the God of Scripture—grandly stern, severely dreadful in his wrath, while he is unbounded in his compassion, and is ever gracious and full of mercy. We must acknowledge the God of the Bible, and not make a deity to ourselves, or else in our thoughts we have broken the divine law, and the fruit of that thought will be, that we shall be idolaters, and sin will be laid at our door.

The third command, as you will clearly perceive, can be broken without saying a word :—" *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*" Light thoughts of God, irreverence of soul towards him, is a violation of this solemn interdict. You have but to think lightly of his name, and you have blasphemed it. Before your mouth has been opened to utter the rash expression, the rebellious thought is a profanation of the Most High.

As for the *law of the Sabbath* in the fourth command, which binds our race, that is readily enough violated by us all. Do not suppose that you are a keeper of the Sabbath because you do no work with your hands; you are just as guilty if you work with your brain. You are to rest on that day from all your own works. Do as much as you please for God on that day, but your mind should lay aside its care. You must not bring your shop here; you might almost as well stop at home and carry on trade. You must not bring your secular burdens into the house of God. Nay, my brethren, leave them at the door, and ask God's grace that you may rise this day from all these things, and give your heart and mind entirely to the worship of him who has sanctified the day unto himself. You see, then, that this command may readily be broken without any overt act, and the breach destroys the validity of the Sabbath to you. It yields you no comfortable rest while your mind is toiling, and tugging, and straining about a thousand troubles and difficulties; but if you kept the command in your spirit it would be a sweet and blessed rest to you.

We turn now to the second table, the commands which relate to men, "*Honor thy father and thy mother.*" Ah! when we were children, and since then, unkind and unhallowed thoughts of our parents have been quite sufficient to convict us of offence against this law. Without a disobedient action, without a rebellious word, the child in thought may be a rebel to his parents.

"*Thou shalt not kill.*:" but Christ tells us that "he that is angry with his brother without cause is a murderer already;" so that thought can slay and kill, and, indeed, it is the angry thought that lays the foundation of the deadly stroke. There would be no murdering and slaying if there were no enmity. Men would not march to slay each other, surely, or waylay their hapless victims, and do desperate deeds of violence, unless first of all their souls were set on fire of hell.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Little will I say on this ; but here is the Lord's own exposition of it—"He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Fornication may thus abound in us to our defilement and our souls' ruin, even though we may still be kept back by fear, mayhap, from the commission of the evil deed. Beware, then, thou who canst gloat upon evil ; thou who canst suck the forbidden sweet behind the door ; thou who canst roll the sweet morsel under thy tongue ; beware lest thou have thy portion with those who fall into the sin. I say not that the thought of the sin is as bad as the sin itself ; it cannot be so, certainly, in its result to others, but still it is a sin, and a sin to be answered for in that tremendous day, when the Judge of all the earth shall allot their portions unto men.

"Thou shalt not steal." Every envious thought of another man, every desire to possess myself of what is not mine ; every thing of this sort in which I would grasp that which does not belong to me, is a constructive theft. The thief does not so much steal when he puts out his hand to take his neighbor's purse, as in the thought which led him to do it, for the hand may sometimes take the purse, without offence—it may be to protect the property of one who is disabled and incapable of guarding it himself. Such a thing is supposable that one man might take another's purse legitimately, and have a right so to do. It is not the act, but the motive when he deliberately ventures to take that which is not his own, and would possess himself of his neighbor's goods to his neighbor's injury—this constitutes the very virus and soul of the theft.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." If I think hardly of my neighbor without a cause ; if I conceive an unjust prejudice against him ; if I look coldly upon him when he really does not deserve it ; if I make up my mind out of some whim or fancy that he is a bad fellow, and shrug my shoulders, and I know not what besides,

though I have never said a word, yet still in thought I have borne false witness against my neighbor. Above all things, brethren, do avoid that shoulder-shrugging. It is an abomination! We sometimes see it in company. Ah! they will not dare to say what it means—the cowards! You might suppose that a man against whom it is directed has killed his mother if you liked, for you are sure to suppose the worst. Do be brave enough, if the charge must be spoken, to speak it; and if it must not be spoken, well then do not say it in that mysterious language which may effectually ruin a man in the estimation of others. Avoid any false witnessing in your thoughts, and you will not bear it in your words.

To the last precept of the catalogue I have already referred: it is especially a thought-command. “*Thou shalt not covet.*” All greedy desires which make us wish to get our neighbors’ goods to the injury of others are sins, and the fruits of such thoughts are guilt, punishment, and the wrath to come.

Let me now conduct you a step further, to another set of evil thoughts, which could not be very easily comprised in my outline of the decalogue.

There are *self-righteous thoughts*—the supposition that we are not so sinful as God says we are, the conceit that we may, perhaps, work ourselves out of our difficulties, and force our way to heaven. Now, the fruit of such a thought as this will be amazement in the day when God will strip us of our self-righteousness, and make us stand naked, to our eternal shame. Beware of self-righteous thoughts, my hearers! They are the Tarpeian rock from which Satan has hurled thousands of souls. It were better for you that a mill-stone were fastened about your neck, and that you were cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should thank God that you are not as other men, when after all you are as corrupt as other men, and will perish as they did. Self-righteousness keeps you from coming to Christ, and

certainly it excludes you from eternal life, and will close the gates of heaven against you. God deliver us from the fruit of such thoughts!

Then, again, *proud, boastful, vain-glorious, self-seeking thoughts* are alike obnoxious. How highly some people think of themselves! You can see it in their gait, and their speech bewrayeth them. Yet their wine is all froth, and their gold is counterfeit. Their speech, when they begin to tell of what they have, and what they can do, and what they did do upon such and such occasions—all this is an abomination to honest men; but their thoughts must be very abominable to God. It is one of the things which he says he hates—"a proud look." God grant us grace to be rid of every proud thought, for we have nothing to be proud of. A proud man is nothing but a wind-bag, and when either the ills of life or the crisis of death shall put a pin into it, what a collapse there will be, how the haughty one will discover himself to be nothing but emptiness and vanity! Get rid of proud thoughts, for, oh! what will they not do? Pride dragged an angel from heaven, and made a devil of him, and pride would drag any of us down to the level of the devil if we fall into its snare.

Another set of thoughts, more common still and not much decried, are *murmuring thoughts*. Ah me! how full some people are of these! They can hardly speak but what they have something to grumble about. Trade with them is always bad. Ever since I have been in London trade has been bad, but it is even worse now. It never was so bad as it is now, except that it was just as bad last year; and, as far as I know, has always been at the worst. Farmers never have, to the best of my recollection, had more than "an average crop," and most years there has been a failure. If the wheat has been good, the turnips have always gone bad, or something. I notice murmuring to be a very common thing with many people, and you no sooner sit down in their cottage than, instead of telling you that some one has been there to

help them a little and give them some assistance, they say they have only the parish allowance—a miserable pittance! So it is; but they forget the mercies that they have. Why should I be always telling how often I have rheumatic pains, and how many times I find that there is something wrong with my constitution? Why should I make it my constant habit to compel everybody to be miserable wherever I go? “Well,” says one, “but you know we cannot help it!” My dear friend, then if you do not help it I will tell you what will be the fruit of it—*you will make yourselves incorrigibly miserable*. You will bring yourselves into a desperate state, in which nothing will comfort you. I do believe that in this respect we are very much our own masters. Not all the bounties of Providence can make us happy, if we have a thankless, ungrateful heart. You may have all that the world can give you, and yet be wretched; or you may be very, very poor, and yet be cheerful. A thankful heart is essential, and, oh! may God be pleased to give us that thankful heart! But what I want you to remember is that murmuring is a great sin. They murmured against God in the wilderness, and He sent fiery serpents among them. God thinks much of our complaints against his providential dealings with us; let us not think so little of the sin of provoking Him with our thoughts.

How prone we are likewise to cherish *unbelieving thoughts*. Oh! that we were all rid of these, but I suppose if I went round these galleries I should find in every pew somebody who has unbelieving thoughts. We fancy that God will forsake us; that Providence will turn against us. We get like old Jacob, when he said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me;” whereas everything is working for us, only we cannot see it. Begone, unbelief, for the fruit of unbelieving thoughts is weakness, sorrow, rebellion against God, and I know not what else of rashness and presumption. God save us from these thoughts!

Procrastinating thoughts have been the fruitful source of mischief to full many of you. You have good thoughts and good resolves, but you always put these things off, and think that better times will come for leaving off your sins and seeking to Christ; albeit you are making a fearful waste of time, and running a perilous risk, and it is to be dreaded that your souls will be lost at the last.

Others of us have to complain of *wandering thoughts when we are worshipping God*, and the fruit of these is to spoil the golden seasons, which, well used, might yield great profit. Oftentimes when the service has been fitted enough to minister refreshment and instruction, and others have been nourished by the word, some poor soul goes out and says, "I have not enjoyed it at all." Why, of course not, for your thoughts have been elsewhere. These are the birds that come down upon the sacrifice; if, like Abraham, we drive them away, we shall be able to worship in peace; but if not, the fruit of wandering thoughts in the house of God is that the service is spoiled. So too in the closet, whether ostensibly engaged in private devotion, or the reading of Scripture, unless the thoughts be centred upon the subject in hand, there can be no spiritual gain in drawing near unto God.

II. For a few minutes now let us think of brighter things, while I mention A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.

"Of which," says an apostle, "we cannot now speak particularly," when he had a long list and a short space: so I must say now. If you would have good fruit in your soul, *cultivate humble thoughts*. No man was ever injured by having too lowly a view of himself. The best definition of humility I ever heard was this—"To think rightly of ourselves." To think of ourselves as below the standard is meanness; to think of ourselves above the standard is pride; but to form a right estimation of ourselves is true humility. Avoid the counterfeit which is in the world—that is mock humility. Be *truly* humble. Have low thoughts of your-

selves, especially before God. Penitent thoughts of sin, humble views with regard to Divine grace, and a close account of your own responsibility are indispensable ; so you will find that humility will sweep out the chamber of your soul, and prepare it for the incoming of the Great Prince.

Cultivate very much *forgiving thoughts towards your fellow-men*. Never be hard to be persuaded to pardon an offence. He that taketh his brother by the throat will be sure to be taken by the throat himself. Evil for evil, it is said, is beast-like ; good for good is man-like ; evil for good is devil-like ; but good for evil is God-like. Try to do it, and if any thing can make the bells ring in your heart, it will be to forgive one who has very greatly and wantonly injured you. The worse the offence, if you can overlook it, the greater will be your own joy, and the better proof will you have that you are a child of God.

Go to bed each night, and wake up each morning with *admiring thoughts of God's goodness, and with adoring thoughts towards God's greatness*. You will find these thoughts to be like bees, that will come home to you laden with honey. Let your soul be a hive of them. Worship the Lord. Think much of him. Let every blessing you receive make you think of him. Do not come to the table and hurriedly offer what we call "grace," because it is the custom to do so, and then have done with thanks, but let your soul really see God's hand in every thing that is on the table. We need not fear worldly thoughts if we were to sanctify these worldly blessings. Said one—"The road on which I tread makes me think of Christ—the way. The door through which I pass makes me think of Christ—the door. I cannot handle money but what I think that I am not my own, but bought with a price. I do not receipt a bill without recollecting that he has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against me. I cannot talk to my fellow-man, and receive my answer, without thinking how I talk with God, and how he answers me." In such manner with many

thoughts of God, you will find the fruit of heavenly-mindedness in your spirit. Angels will go to and fro between you and the courts of the Most High, if you have many of these admiring and adoring thoughts of God.

Thankful thoughts are well deserving your high encouragement. Get a cage full of these birds of paradise, and let them fly about in the groves of your soul, and sing there at all times. There is no better companion than cheerful gratitude. If a man can but see the mercy of God in every thing, instead of looking always at the black side of the picture, he will be happy indeed. The fruit of thankful thoughts will be summer in his soul, even when the winds of winter rage outside. Cultivate thankful thoughts as you cultivate sweet flowers in your garden.

Yet again dear friends, get *many and abundant believing thoughts*. When thou canst not see thy way, still trust in thy Lord. Believe in him. Though every thing should give the lie to the promise, still believe the promise to be true.

Abound much in *thoughts of submission to God*. Every morning exercise such thoughts. Put thy soul into God's hand that he may deal with thee according to his will all the day; and each night, when thou reviewest the day, thank God for it all, whatever it may have been, knowing that it must be good, nay, must be best if God has ordered it.

I will finally say—seek, believer, to *have many longing thoughts after Christ*. Have longing thoughts to be with him where he is. Let Christ have thy best thoughts—the cream of them. Let him have the first growth of your spirit. Be with him in waking and ask for “a morning without clouds.” Say to him in the evening—“Abide with us, for the day is far spent.” And if you lie awake at night, still seek to have some precious thought of Christ, like a wafer made with honey, to put under your tongue. Oh! we can bring heaven down to earth if we can take our thoughts up to heaven.

If thoughts be the wings, and the spirit be the wind, we will fly away to the celestial Paradise. We cannot climb to Pisgah's top and stand on Nebo, and look to the promised land except in our thoughts, but our thoughts can take us to

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest."

Thought can introduce us to the apostles and martyrs. Thought can wrap us in white robes, and put crowns upon our brow. Thought can learn the music of the spheres, and unite in the everlasting song. Thought can enter into fellowship with God, and make us lie in Jesus' bosom.

Be much, then, in such thoughts as these, and may the fruit of your thoughts be such as God himself may delight in, to Jesus Christ's praise. Amen.

SERMON XL

THE COVENANT.

"FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAITH THE LORD ; I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MIND, AND WRITE THEM IN THEIR HEARTS ; AND I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE TO ME A PEOPLE."—Heb. viii. 10.

THE doctrine of the covenant lies at the root of all true theology. It has been said that he who well understands the distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, is a master in divinity. I am persuaded that most of the mistakes which men make concerning the doctrines of Scripture, are based upon fundamental errors with regard to the covenants of law and of grace. May God grant us now the power to instruct, and you the grace to receive instruction on this vital subject.

The human race, in the order of history, as far as this world is concerned, first stood in subjection to God under the covenant of works. Adam was the representative man. A certain law was given him. If he kept it, he and all his posterity would be blessed as the result of obedience. If he broke it, he would incur the curse himself, and entail it on all represented by him. That covenant our first father broke. He fell ; he failed to fulfil his obligations : in his fall he involved us all, for we were all in his loins, and he represented us before God. Our ruin, then, was complete before we were born ; we were ruined by him who stood as our first representative. To be saved by the works of

the law is impossible, for under that covenant we are already lost. If saved at all it must be on quite a different plan, not on the plan of doing and being rewarded for it, for that has been tried, and the representative man in whom it was tested has failed for us all. We have all failed in his failure; it is hopeless, therefore, to expect to win Divine favor by any thing that we can do, or to merit Divine blessing by way of reward.

But Divine mercy has interposed, and provided a plan of salvation from the fall. That plan is another covenant, a covenant made with Christ Jesus the Son of God, who is fitly called by the Apostle, "the Second Adam," because he stood again as the representative of men. Now, the second covenant, so far as Christ was concerned, was a covenant of works quite as much as the other. It was on this wise. Christ shall come into the world and perfectly obey the Divine law: he shall also, inasmuch as the first Adam has broken the law, suffer the penalty of sin. If he shall do both of these, then all whom he represents shall be blessed in his blessedness, and saved because of his merit. You see, then, that until our Lord finished his substitutionary work, it was a covenant of works towards him. He had certain works to perform, upon condition of which certain blessings should be given to us. Our Lord has kept that covenant. His part of it has been fulfilled to the letter. There is no commandment which he has not honored; there is no penalty of the broken law which he has not endured. He became a servant and was obedient, yea, obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He has thus done what the first Adam could not accomplish, and he has retrieved what the first Adam forfeited by his transgressions. He has established the covenant, and now it ceases to be a covenant of works, for the works are all performed.

"Jesus did them, did them all,
Long, long ago."

And now what remaineth of the covenant? God on his part

has solemnly pledged himself to give undeserved favor to as many as were represented in Christ Jesus. For as many as the Saviour died for, there is stored up a boundless mass of blessing, which shall be given to them, not through their works, but as the sovereign gift of the grace of God, according to his covenant promise, by which they shall be saved.

Behold, my brethren, the hope of the sons of men. The hope of their saving themselves is crushed, for they are already lost. The hope of their being saved by works is a fallacious one, for they cannot keep the law; they have already broken it. But there is a way of salvation opened on this wise,—whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ receives and partakes of the bliss which Christ has bought. All the blessings which belong to the covenant of grace through the work of Christ shall belong to every soul that believeth in Jesus. Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, unto him shall the blessing of the new covenant of grace be undoubtedly given.

I hope that this explanation is plain enough. If Adam had kept the law we should have been blessed by his keeping it. He broke it, and we have been cursed through him. Now the Second Adam, Christ Jesus, has kept the law, we are, therefore, if believers, represented in Christ and blessed with the results of the obedience of Jesus Christ to his Father's will. He said of old, "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God! Thy law is my delight." He has done that will, and the blessings of grace are now freely given to the sons of men.

I shall ask your attention then, first, *to the Privilege of the Covenant of Grace*; and secondly, *to the Parties concerned in it*.

I. AS TO THE PRIVILEGES OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE.

The first privilege is, that *to as many as are interested in it, there shall be given an illumination of their minds* "I will put my laws into their mind." By nature we are dark to

wards God's will. Conscience keeps up in us a sort of broken recollection of what God's will was. It is a monument of God's will, but it is often hardly legible. A man does not care to read it, he is averse to what he reads there. "Their foolish heart was darkened," is the expression of Scripture with regard to the mind of man. But the Holy Spirit is promised to those interested in the covenant. He shall come upon their minds and shed light instead of darkness, illuminating them as to what the will of God is. The ungodly man has some degree of light, but it is little better than darkness visible, and even that light he does not love. He loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. But where the Holy Spirit comes, he floods the soul with a Divine lustre, in which the soul delights, and desires to participate to the fullest degree. Brethren, the renewed man under the covenant of grace, does not need constantly to resort to the law to learn what he ought to do, nor to some fellow-Christian to ask instruction, he has not the law of God written on a table of stone, or upon parchment, or upon paper; it is imprinted upon his own mind. There is now a Divine, infallible Spirit dwelling within him, who tells him the right and the wrong, and by this he speedily discerns between the good and the evil. He no longer puts darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, his mind is enlightened as to the true holiness which God requires.

Just mark the men to whom this light comes. All of them are depraved by nature, but by practice some of them become yet further blinded. Is it not marvellous that a poor heathen, who scarcely seemed to recognize the distinction between right and wrong, before the Spirit of God entered his mind, has afterwards, without needing to be taught all the precepts individually, received at once the light of a tender conscience, which has led him to know the right and love it, and to see the evil and eschew it? If you want to civilize the world it must be by preaching the Gos-

pel. If you want to have men well instructed as to the right and the wrong, it must be by the enlightenment which only God himself can impart. He promises "I will do it," and oh ! how blessedly he doeth it, when he takes the man who loved evil and called it good, and so sheds a Divine beam into his soul, that henceforth he cannot be perverse, cannot be obstinate, but submits himself to the Divine will. That is one of the first blessings of the covenant—the illumination of the understanding.

The next blessing is, "*And I will write my laws in their hearts.*" This is more than knowing the law—ininitely more. "I will write the law, not merely on their understandings, where it may guide them, but in their hearts, where it shall lead them." Brethren, the Holy Spirit makes men love the will of God, makes them delight in all which God delights in, and abhor that which God abhorreth. It is well said in the text that *God* will do this, for certainly it is not what a man can do for himself. The Ethiopian might sooner change his skin or the leopard his spots. It is not what the minister can do, for though he may preach to the ear, he cannot write God's law on the affections. I have marvelled at the expression used in the text, "I will write my law *in* their hearts." To write *on* a heart must be difficult work, but to write *in* a heart, in the very centre of the heart, who can do this but God? A man cuts his name upon a tree in the bark, and there it stands, and the letters grow with the tree ; but to cut his name in the heart of the tree—how shall he accomplish this? And yet God doth divinely engrave his will and his law *in* the very heart and nature of man ! I know what the vulgar notion is concerning Christian people, that they do not conform to this and that custom because they are afraid ; they would like to revel in the vanities of the world, but they do not care to encounter the penalties. Ah ! ye sons of men, ye comprehend not the mysterious work of the Spirit ! He doeth nothing of this sort, He maketh not the child of God to be

a serf, a slave, in fear of punishment, but he so changes the nature of men that they turn away with loathing from the things they once delighted in, and can no more indulge in the sins which were once sweet to them, than an angel could wallow in the mire with the swine. Oh! this is a gracious work, and this is a blessed covenant in which it is promised that we shall be taught to know and love and do the right with a willing mind.

Am I addressing some to-night who have been saying—"I wish I could be saved?" What do you mean by that? Do you mean that you wish you might escape hell? Alas! I would to God you had another wish, namely—"Oh! that I could escape from sin! Oh! that I could be made pure! Oh! that my passions could be bridled! Oh! that my longings and my likings could be changed!" If that is your wish, see what a gospel I have to preach to you. I have not to come and tell you—Do this and do not that. Moses tells you that, and the preacher of the law speaks to you after that fashion; but I, the preacher of the gospel, unveiling the covenant of grace to your sight, tell you that Jesus Christ has done such a work for sinners that God now for Christ's sake comes to them, makes them see the right, and by a Divine work upon them and in them, makes them love holiness and follow after righteousness. I protest, I count this one of the greatest blessings that ever tongue could speak of. I would sooner be holy than happy if the two things could be divorced. Were it possible for a man always to sorrow and yet to be pure, I would choose the sorrow if I might win the purity; for, beloved, to be free from the power of sin, to be made to love holiness, though I have spoken after the manner of men to you, is true happiness. A man that is holy is in order with the creation; he is in harmony with God. It is impossible for that man long to suffer. He may for a while endure for his lasting good, but as sure as God is happy the holy must be happy. This world is not so constituted that in the long run holiness shall go with

sorrow, for in eternity God shall show that to be pure is to be blessed, to be obedient to the Divine will is to be eternally glorified. In proclaiming to you these two blessings of the covenant, I have virtually preached to you the open kingdom of heaven, open to all such whom God's grace shall look upon with an eye of mercy.

The next blessing of the covenant is—" *I will be to them a God.*" If any ask me what this means, I must reply—Give me a month to consider over it. And when I had considered the text for a month, I should ask another month; and when I had waited a year, I should ask another year; and when I had waited till I grew gray, I would still ask the postponement of any attempt to fully open it up until eternity. "I will be to them a God." Now, mark you, where the Spirit of God has come to teach you the Divine will, and make you love the Divine will, God becomes to you—What! a father? Ay, a loving, tender father. A shepherd? Ay, a watchful Guardian of his flock. A friend? Ay, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother! A rock? A refuge? A fortress? A high tower? A castle of defence? A home? A heaven? Ay, all that, but when he said "I will be their God," he said more than all these put together, for "I will be to them a God," comprehendeth all gracious titles, all blessed promises, and all Divine privileges. It comprehendeth—ay, now I halt, for this is infinite, and the infinite comprehendeth all blessings. "I will be to them a God." Do you want provision? The cattle on a thousand hills are his; it will not impoverish him to enrich you; he will give to you like a God. Do you want comfort? He is the God of all consolation; he will comfort you like a God. Do you want guidance? There is infinite wisdom waiting at your beck. Do you want support? There is eternal power, the same which girds the everlasting hills, waiting to be your stay. Do you want grace? He delighteth in mercy, and all that mercy is yours. Every attribute of God belongs to his people in covenant with him. All

that God is or can be—and what is there not in that?—all that you can conceive and more; all the angels have and more; all that heaven is and more; all that is in Christ, even the boundless fulness of Godhead—all this belongs to you if you are in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. How rich, how blessed, how august, how noble are those in covenant with God, confederate with heaven! Infinity belongs to you. Lift up your head, O child of God, and rejoice in a promise which I cannot expound, and you cannot explore. There I must leave it; it is a deep which we strive in vain to fathom.

Notice the next blessing: "*And they shall be to me a people.*" All flesh belongs to God in a certain sense. All men are his by right of creation, and he hath an infinite sovereignty over them. But he looks down upon the sons of men, and he selects some, and he says, "These shall be my peculiar people." When the King of Navarre was fighting for his throne, the writer who hymns the battle, says—

"He looked upon the foemen, and his glance was stern and high;
He looked upon his people, and the tear was in his eye."

And when he saw some of the French in arms against him—

"Then out spoke gentle Henry, No Frenchman is my foe,
Down, down, with every foreigner, but let your brethren go."

The king had an eye to his people even when they were in rebellion against him, and he had a different thought towards them from what he had towards others. "Let them go," he seemed to say, "they are my people." So, mark you, in the great battles and strifes of this world, when God lets loose the dread artillery of heaven, his glance is stern upon his enemies, but the tear is in his eye towards his people. He is always tender towards them. "Spare my people," saith he, and the angels interpose lest these chosen ones should dash their feet against a stone. Princes have their treasures, their pearls, their jewels, their rubies, their

diamonds, and these are the peculiar treasures of kings, and truly those chosen ones who are interested in the covenant of grace are the peculiar treasure of God. He values them above all things else besides. In fact, he keeps the world revolving for them. The world is but a scaffold for the church. He will pull down creation when once it has answered his end for his saints; yea, sun, and moon, and stars shall pass away like worn out rags when once he has gathered together his own elect, and enfolded them forever within the walls of heaven. For them time moves; for them worlds exist. He measures the nations according to their number, and he makes the very stars of heaven to fight against their enemies. "They shall be to me a people." The favor which is contained in such love it is not for tongue to express. Perhaps on some of those quiet resting-places prepared for the saints in heaven, it shall be a part of our eternal enjoyment to contemplate the heights and depths of these golden lines.

II. And now, brethren, I wish I had time to go over the other parts contained in the eleventh and twelfth verses of the chapter, but I have not, for I have a practical business to do, and it is to inquire—FOR WHOM HAS GOD MADE THIS COVENANT?

I said he made it with Christ, but he made it with Christ as the representative of his people. The question just now, for you, and for me, and for each one is—"Am I interested in Christ? Did Christ Jesus stand for me?" Now, if I were to say that Christ was the representative of the whole world, you would not find any substantial advantage in that, because the great proportion of mankind being lost, whatever interest they may have in Christ, it is certainly of no beneficial value to them as to their eternal salvation. The question I ask is—Have I such a special interest in Christ, that this covenant holds good towards me; so that I shall have, or so that I now have, the enlightened mind, and the sanctified

affections, and the possession of God to be my God? Be not deceived, my brethren; I cannot, and you cannot turn over the leaves of the book of destiny. It is impossible for us to force our way into the cabinet chamber of the Eternal; I hope you are not deluded by superstitious ideas that you have had a revelation made to you, or that some especial sound or dream has informed you that you are elect of God.

Yet on sounder premises I will try to help you a little. Have you obtained already any of these covenant blessings? Have you the enlightened mind? Do you find now that your spirit tells you which is the right and which is the wrong? Better still, have you a love for that which is good? Have you a hatred for that which is evil? If so, as you have one covenant blessing, all the rest go with it. Now, dear friend, have you passed through a great change? Have you come to hate that which you once loved, and to love that which you once hated? If you have, the covenant lies before you like Canaan before the ravished eyes of Moses on the top of the mountain. Look now, for it is yours. It flows with milk and honey, and it belongs to you and you shall inherit it. But if there has been no such change wrought in you, I cannot offer you any congratulation, but I thank God I can do what may serve your turn. I can hold out to you divine direction for obtaining an interest in this covenant, and for clearing up your interest in it, which is simple. It is contained in three words. Mark them well,—“Believe and live,” for whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life, which is the great blessing of the covenant. The argument is obvious. Having the blessing of the covenant you must needs be in the covenant, and being in the covenant, Christ evidently must have representatively stood sponsor for you. But saith one, “What is it to believe in Christ?” Another word is a synonym to it. It is—*trust* Christ. “How do I know whether he died for me in particular?” Trust him whether thou knowest that or not. Jesus Christ is lifted up upon

the cross of Calvary as the atonement for sin; and the proclamation is given out, "Look, look; look and live," and whosoever will cast away his self-righteousness,—cast away every thing upon which he now dependeth, and will come and trust in the finished work of our exalted Saviour, has in that very faith the token that he is one of those who were in Christ when he went up to the cross and wrought out eternal redemption for his elect. I do not believe that Christ died on the tree to render men salvable, but to save them; not that some men might be saved "if," but really to redeem them, and he did there and then give himself a ransom; he there paid their debts, there cast their sins into the Red Sea, and there made a clean sweep of every thing that could be laid to the charge of God's elect. Thou art assuredly one of his elect if thou believest. Christ died for thee if thou believest in him, and thy sins are forgiven thee. "Well, but," saith one, "how about that change of nature?" It always comes with faith; it is the next akin to faith. Wherever there is genuine faith in Christ, the new nature is present, and God's law is in the heart. A sense of mercy breeds affection; affection to Christ breeds hatred to sin; hatred to sin purges the soul; the soul being purged, the life is changed. You must not begin with mending yourselves externally; you must begin with the new internal life; it is bestowed as the gift of God through simply believing in Jesus. A negro who had been for some time attending at a place of worship, had imbibed the idea that he was saved because he had been baptized. He had been to one of those places where they teach little children to lie after this fashion—"In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." "Now," said he, very naturally, for so the catechism teaches, and a gross falsehood it is—"I am saved because I have been baptized, that has made me a child of God." Now the good man who sought to instruct him in the gospel, could find no metaphor to suit his

intellect better than taking him into the kitchen, and showing him a black ink-bottle, "Now," said he, "I will wash it," and he washed the outside of the black ink-bottle, and invited the man to drink out of it because it was clean. "No," said the man, "it is all black; it is not clean because you have washed the outside." "Ah!" said he, "and so it is with you; all that drops of water could do for you, all that baptism could do for you, is to wash the outside, but that does not make you clean, for the filth is all within." Now, the work of the covenant of grace is not to wash the outside, not to cleanse the flesh, not to pass you through rites and ceremonies, and Episcopal hands, but to wash the inside; to clean the heart, to cleanse the vitals, to renew the soul, and this is the only salvation that will ever bring a man to enter heaven. You may go to-night and renounce all your outward vices—I hope you will; you may go and practise all church ceremonies, and if they are Scriptural I wish you may; but they will do nothing for you, nothing whatever as to your entering heaven, if you miss one thing else, that is, getting the covenant blessing of the renewed nature, which can only be got as the gift of God through Jesus Christ, and as the result of a simple faith in him who died upon the tree.

I press the work of self-examination upon you all, I press it earnestly upon you church members. It is of no avail that you have been baptized, or take the sacrament. Avail? Indeed it shall bring a greater responsibility and a curse upon you, unless your hearts have been by the Holy Spirit made anew according to the covenant of promise. If you have not a new heart, oh! go to your chambers, fall upon your knees, and cry to God for it. May the Holy Spirit constrain you so to do, and while you are pleading, remember the new heart comes from the bleeding heart of Jesus, and the changed nature comes from the suffering nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look you alone to Jesus, for there all your help is laid.

These blessings I have spoken of seem to me to be a *great consolation and inspiration*. They are a great *consolation* to believers. You are in the covenant, my dear brother. You tell me you are very poor; but God has said—"I will be your God." Why, you are very rich. A man may not have a penny in the world, but if he has a diamond he is rich. So, if a man has neither penny nor diamond, if he has his God he is rich. Ah! but your coat is threadbare, and you do not see where means are to come from to renew your apparel. "Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." You have the same God that the lilies have, and "shall he so clothe the grass of the field which to day is and to morrow is cast into the oven, and shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" I said also, it would be an *inspiration*, and I think it is. It is an inspiration for us all to work for Christ, because we are sure to have some results. I would that the nations were converted to Christ. I would that all this city belonged to my Lord and Master, and that every street were inhabited by those who loved his name; but when I see sin abounding and the Gospel often put to the rout, I fall back upon this—"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord knoweth them that are his." He shall have his own. The infernal powers shall not rob Christ, he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. Calvary does not mean defeat. Gethsemane a defeat? Impossible! The Mighty Man who went up to the cross to bleed and die for us, being also the Son of God, did not there achieve a defeat but a victory. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands." If some will not be saved, others shall. If, being bidden, some count themselves not worthy to come to the feast, others shall be brought in, even the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and the supper shall be furnished with guests. If they come

not from this land, they shall come from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. If it should come to pass that Israel be not gathered, lo, the heathen shall be gathered unto Christ. Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands, Sinim shall yield herself to the Redeemer; the desert-ranger shall bow the knee, and the far-off stranger inquire for Christ. Oh! no, beloved, the purposes of God are not frustrated; the eternal will of God is not defeated. Christ has died a glorious death, and he shall have a full reward for all his pain. “Therefore, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

SERMON XII.

A SERMON TO OPEN NEGLECTERS AND NOMINAL FOLLOWERS OF RELIGION.

The following five sermons, numbered from XII. to XVI., were delivered in the Agricultural Hall, Islington, to an audience never numbering less than twenty thousand persons. It will be observed that they are very simple, and were intended so to be.

"BUT WHAT THINK YE? A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS; AND HE CAME TO THE FIRST, AND SAID, SON, GO WORK TO DAY IN MY VINEYARD. HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I WILL NOT: BUT AFTERWARD HE REPENTED, AND WENT. AND HE CAME TO THE SECOND AND SAID LIKEWISE. AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I GO, SIR: AND WENT NOT. WHETHER OF THEM TWAIN DID THE WILL OF HIS FATHER? THEY SAY UNTO HIM, THE FIRST. JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT THE PUBLICANS AND THE HARLOTS GO INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE YOU. FOR JOHN CAME UNTO YOU IN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND YE BELIEVED HIM NOT: BUT THE PUBLICANS AND THE HARLOTS BELIEVED HIM: AND YE, WHEN YE HAD SEEN IT, REPENTED NOT AFTERWARDS, THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE HIM."—Matthew xxi. 28-32.

THE sight of this vast arena, and of this crowded assembly, reminds me of other spectacles which, in days happily long past, were seen in the amphitheatres of the old Roman Empire. Around, tier upon tier, were the assembled multitudes, with their cruel eyes and iron hearts; and in the centre stood a solitary, friendless man, waiting till the doors of the lion's den should be uplifted, that he might yield himself up a witness for Christ and a sacrifice to the popular fury. There would have been no difficulty then to have divided the precious from the vile in that audience. The most thoughtless wayfarer who should enter into the amphitheatre, would know at once who was the disciple of Christ and who were the enemies of the Crucified

One. There stood the bravely-calm disciple, about to die, out all around, in those mighty tiers of the Colosseum, or of the amphitheatre of some provincial town, as the case might be, there sat matrons and nobles, princes and peasants, plebeians and patricians, senators and soldiers, all gazing downward with the same fierce, unpitying look; all boisterous for their heathen gods, and all vociferous in the joy with which they gazed upon the agonies of the disciple of the hated Galilean, butchered to make a Roman holiday. Another sight is before us to-day, with far more happy associations; but alas! it is a far more difficult task this day to separate the chaff from the wheat, the precious from the vile, than in the day when the apostle fought with beasts at Ephesus. Here, in this arena, I hope there are hundreds, if not thousands, who would be prepared to die for our Lord Jesus; and in yonder crowded seats, we may count by hundreds those who bear the name and accept the gospel of the Man of Nazareth; and yet, I fear me, that both in these living hills on either side, and upon this vast floor, there are many enemies of the Son of God, who are forgetful of his righteous claims—who have cast from them those cords of love which should bind them to his throne, and have never submitted to the mighty love which showed itself in his cross and in his wounds. I cannot attempt the separation. You must grow together until the harvest. To divide you were a task which at this hour angels could not perform, but which one day they will easily accomplish, when at their Master's bidding, the harvest being come, they shall gather together first the tares in bundles to burn them, and afterwards the wheat into Jehovah's barn. I shall not attempt the division, but I shall ask each man to attempt it for himself in his own case. I say unto you, young men and maidens, old men and fathers, this day examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Let no man take it for granted that he is a Christian because he has helped to swell the numbers of a Christian assembly.

Let no man judge his fellow, but let each man judge himself. To each one of you I say, with deepest earnestness, let a division be made by your conscience, and let your understandings separate between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. Though no man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side, shall go through the midst of you to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations of this city, let conscience take the inkhorn and honestly make the mark, or leave the favored sign unmade, and let each man question himself this morning, "Am I on the Lord's side? Am I for Christ, or for his enemies? Do I gather with him, or do I scatter abroad?" "Divide! divide!" they say in the House of Commons; let us say the same in this great congregation this day. Political divisions are but trifles compared with the all-important distinction which I would have you consider. Divide as you will be divided to the right and to the left in the great day when Christ shall judge the world in righteousness. Divide as you will be divided when the bliss of heaven, or the woes of hell, shall be your everlasting portion.

If the whole of us were thus divided into two camps, and we could say, These have made a covenant with God by sacrifice, and those on the other hand are still enemies to God by wicked works, looking at the last class we might still feel it necessary by way of personal application to make a division among them; for although all unbelievers are alike unpardoned and unsaved, yet they are not alike in the circumstances of their case and the outward forms of their sins. Alike in being without Christ, they are still very varied in their mental and moral condition. I trust I was guided by the Spirit of God to my text this morning, for it is of such a character, that while it enables me to address the whole mass of the unconverted, it gives me a hopeful opportunity of getting at the conscience of each by dividing the great company of the unconverted into two distinct classes. Oh that

for each tribe of unbelievers, there may be a blessing in store this day.

First, we shall speak to *those who are avowedly disobedient to God*; and, secondly, to those who are *deceptively submissive to him*.

I. First, we have a word for THOSE WHO ARE AVOWEDLY DISOBEDIENT TO GOD. There are many such here. God has said to you as he says to all who hear the gospel, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard;" and you have replied, perhaps honestly, but certainly very boldly, very unkindly, very unjustly, "I will not." You have made no bones about it, but given a refusal point-blank to the claims of your Creator. You have spoken your mind right out, not only in words, but in a more forcible and unmistakable manner, for actions speak far more loudly than words. You have said, over and over again, by your actions, "I will not serve God, or believe in his Son Jesus." My dear friend, I am glad to see you here this morning, and trust that matters will change with you ere you leave this hall; but at present you have not yielded even an outward obedience to God, but in all ways have said, "I will not." *Practically* you have said, "I will not worship God, I will not attend a place of worship on the Sunday—it is a weariness intolerable to me. I shall not sing the praise of my Maker—I will not pretend to bless the God for whom I have no love. In public prayer I shall not join—I have no heart for it. I shall not make a pretence of repeating morning and nightly prayer in private—what is the good of it? I will not pray at all; I do not believe in its efficacy, and I will not be such a Lypocrite as to follow a vain practice in which I have no belief whatever. As for what is called sin, I love it and will not give it up." You are proud of being called an honest man, for you own the claims of your fellow-men upon you, but you scorn to be thought religious, for you do not admit the rights of your Maker. To the righteous

requests of others you yield a cheerful obedience, but to the just and tender request of God you give a plain and evident denial. As clearly as actions can speak, you say by your neglect of the Sabbath, by your disregard of prayer, by your never reading the Bible, by your perseverance in known sin, and by the whole course of your life, "I will not." Like Pharaoh, you have demanded, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" You are of the same mind as those of old, who said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there if we keep his ordinances?"

Moreover, my friend, you have not as yet given an assent to the doctrines of God's Word; on the contrary, *intellectually* as well as practically, you go not at God's bidding. You have set up in your mind the idea that you must understand every thing before you will believe it—an idea, let me tell you, which you will never be able to carry out, for you cannot understand your own existence; and there are ten thousand other things around you which you never can comprehend, but which you must believe or remain forever a gigantic fool. Still you cavil at this doctrine and that doctrine, railing at the gospel system in general; and if you were asked at a working-man's conference, why you did not go to a place of worship, you would perhaps say that you kept away from worship because you did not like this doctrine or that. Let me say on my own account, that as far as I am personally concerned, it is a very small consideration to me whether you do like my doctrine or do not; for your own sake I am anxious above measure that you should believe the truth as it is in Jesus; but while you live in sin, your dislike of a doctrine will very probably only make me feel the more sure of its truth, and lead me to preach it with more confidence and vehemence. Think you that we are to learn God's truth from the likings or dislikings of those who refuse to worship him, and want an excuse for their sins? Oh unconverted men and women, it is very long before we shall come to you to learn what you

AND NOMINAL FOLLOWERS OF RELIGION.

would have us preach, and when we fall so low as to do that, you yourselves will despise us. What! shall the physician ask his patient what kind of medicine he would wish to have prescribed? Then the man needs no physician, he can prescribe for himself. Show the doctor out at the back door directly. What is the use of such a physician? Of what service is a minister who will truckle to depraved tastes and sinful appetites, and say, "How would you like me to preach to you? What smooth things shall I offer you?" Ah souls! we have some higher end to be served than merely pleasing you. We would save you by distasteful truths, for honeyed lies will ruin you. That teaching which the carnal mind most delights in, is the most deadly and delusive. With many of you, your beliefs, and tastes, and likes, must be changed, or else you will never enter heaven. I admit that in a measure I like your honesty in having said outright, "I will not serve God;" but it is an honesty which makes me shudder, for it betrays a heart hard as the nether millstone.

Again, you have said, "I will not serve God," and up to this time it is very possible that you have never been in the humor to repent of having said it, for the ways of sin are sweet to you, and your heart is fixed in its rebellion. You have never felt that conviction of sin which the Holy Spirit has wrought in some of us; if you had felt it, you would soon have been shaken out of your "I will not." If God's power of grace, of which thousands of us bear witness that it is as real a power as that which guides the stars or wings the wind—if God's almighty grace should once get a hold of you, you would no longer say, "I do not believe this or that;" for, as trembling as any of those whom you now despise, you would cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" Up till now you have never felt that power, and therefore I cannot wonder that you do not acknowledge it, although the testimony of honest witnesses ought to have some weight with you. You are practically, intellectually, and

avowedly no Christian ; you have never deceived yourself and others by making a profession which you do not honor, but you have gone on in your own chosen path, saying with more or less resolution, in answer to every call of the gospel, "I will not."

We said just now that the answer of the son to his father as recorded in our text was very plain ; it was not, however, very genuine, or such as his father might have expected. His father said, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard ;" and the son rudely said, "I will not, that is flat ;" and without another word of apology or reason went his way. This is not quite as it should be. Is it ? Even so, my friend, you may have been too hasty and so have been unjust. Is it not very possible you have denied to God and his gospel the respect which both really deserve ? You have spoken very plainly, but at the same time very thoughtlessly, very harshly to the God who has deserved better things of you. Have you ever given the claims of the Lord Jesus a fair consideration ? Have you not dismissed the gospel with a sneer quite unworthy of you ? Have you not been afraid to look the matters between God and your soul fairly in the face ? I believe it to be the case of hundreds here ; I know it to be the case of thousands and tens of thousands in London. They have put their foot down, and they have said, "None of your religion for me ! I have made up my mind and I will never alter ; I hate it and will not listen to it." Does no small voice within ever tell them that this is not fair to themselves or to God ? Is the matter so easily to be decided ? Suppose it should turn out that the religion of Jesus is true, what then ? What will be the lot of those who despised him ? My hearer, the religion of Jesus is true, and I have proved its truth in my own case ; do, I pray you, consider it, and do not trifle away your immortal soul. Thus saith the Lord, "Consider your ways."

It is now time for me to tell the openly ungodly what is his real state. You have been more than a little proud of

your honesty ; and looking down upon certain professors of religion you have said, "Ah ! I make no such pretences as they do, I am honest, I am." Friend, you cannot have a greater abhorrence of hypocrites than I have; if you can find a fair chance of laughing at them, pray do so. If by any means you can stick pins into their wind-bags, and let the gas of their profession out, pray do so. I try to do a little of it in my way, do you do the same ! You and I are agreed in this, I hope, in heartily hating any thing like sham and falsehood ; but if you begin to hold your head up, and think yourself so very superior because you make no profession, I must take you down a little by reminding you that it is no credit to a thief that he makes no profession of being honest, and it is not thought to be exceedingly honorable to a man that he makes no profession of speaking the truth. For the fact is, that a man who does not profess to be honest is a professed thief, and he who does not claim to speak the truth is an acknowledged liar ; thus in escaping one horn you are thrown upon another, you miss the rock but run upon the quicksand. You are a confessed and avowed neglecter of God, a professed despiser of the great salvation, an acknowledged disbeliever in the Christ of God. When our Government at any time arrests persons suspected of Fenianism, they have no difficulty about those gentlemen who glory in wearing the green uniform and flaunting the big feather. "Come along," says the constable, "you are the man, for you wear the regimentals of a rebel." Even so when the angel of justice arrests the enemies of the Lord, he will have no difficulty in accusing and arresting you, for, laying his hand upon your shoulder, he will say, "You wear the regimentals of an enemy of God ; you plainly, and unblushingly, acknowledge that you do not fear God nor trust in his salvation." No witnesses need be called concerning you at the last great day ; you will stand up, not quite so bravely as you do to-day, for, when the heavens are on a blaze, and the earth is rocking to and fro, and the great

white cloud fills the field of vision, and the eyes of the great Judge shall burn like lamps of fire, you will put on a different mien and a different carriage from that which you maintain before a poor preacher of the gospel. Ah ! my ungodly hearer, with such a case as thine there shall be no need to judge, for out of thine own mouth shalt thou be condemned.

Yet I came not here to tell you of your sins only, but to help you to escape from them. It is necessary that this much should be said, but we now turn to something far more pleasant. I am in hopes this day that some of you will listen to that little word in the text, "*afterward*." He said, "I will not ; but *afterward* he repented, and went." It is a long lane which has no turning, let us trust that we have come to the turning now. There is space left you for repentance ; though you may have been a drunkard, or a swearer, or unchaste, the die is not yet cast, a change is yet possible. May God grant that you may have reached the time when it shall be said of you, "Afterward he repented he changed his mind ; he believed upon Jesus, and obeyed the word of the Lord, and went." Perhaps the son in the parable thought a little more calmly about it. He said to himself, "I will consider the matter, second thoughts are often best. I growled at my good father, and gave him a sharp answer, and I saw the tears standing in the good man's eye. I am sorry I grieved him. The thought of grieving him makes me change my mind. I said 'No' to him," said he, "but I did not think about it. I forgot that if I go and work in my father's vineyard, I shall be working for myself, for I am his eldest son, and all that he has will belong to me, that I am very foolish to refuse to work to my own advantage. Ah ! now I see my father had my advantage at heart, I will even go as he bade me." See, he shoulders his tools, and away he marches to labor with all his might. He said, "I will not," but he repented and went, and it is admitted by all that he did the will of his father. Oh, I hope that many a man and woman now in this Agricultural Hall will this

day cry, "I do retract what I have said. I will go to my Father, and will say to him, 'I will do thy bidding. I will not grieve thy love. I will not lose the opportunity of advancing my soul's best interest; I obey the gospel command.'" I will suppose that I see one such before me, and I will speak to him. Perhaps he said, "I will not," because he really did not understand what religion was. How few after all know what the way of salvation is; though they go to church, and to chapel, they have not yet learned God's plan of pardoning sinners. Do you know the plan of salvation? Hear it and live by it. You have offended God; God must punish sin; it is a fixed law that sin must be punished; how then can God have mercy upon you? Why, only in this way: Jesus Christ came from heaven and he suffered in the room, place, and stead of all who trust him; suffered what they ought to have suffered, so that God is just, and yet at the same time he is able to forgive the very chief of sinners through the merits of his dear Son. Your debts, if you be a believer in him, Christ has paid on your behalf. If you do but come and rest upon Jesus and upon Jesus only, God cannot punish you for your sins, for he punished Jesus for them, and it would not be just of him to punish Christ and then to punish you, to exact payment first from the Surety and afterwards from the debtor. My dear hearer, whoever thou mayest be, whatever thy past life may have been, if thou wilt trust Christ, thou shalt be saved from all thy sin in a moment, the whole of thy past life shall be blotted out there shall not remain in God's book so much as a single charge against thy soul, for Christ who died for thee, shall take thy guilt away and leave thee without a blot before the face of God. Read the last verse of my text, and you will see that it was by believing that men entered into the kingdom of God of old, and it is still by believing that men are saved. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist, and if you look to that bleeding Lamb, you shall live. Do you understand this? Is it not simple? Is it not suit-

able to you? Will you still refuse to obey it? Does not the Holy Spirit prompt you to relent? Do you not even now say, "Is it so simple? I will even trust in Jesus:

' Guilty, but with heart relenting,
To the Saviour's wounds I'll fly.'

I will come, by God's help, this morning, lest death should come before the sun sets. I will trust Christ to save me. Precious way of salvation! Why should I not be saved?"

It is possible too, that you may have said, "I will not," because you really thought there was no hope for you. Ah! my friend, let me assure you—and oh! how glad I am to be able to do it—that there is hope for the vilest, through the precious blood of Jesus. No man can have gone too far for the long arm of Christ to reach him. Christ delights to save the biggest sinners. He said to his apostles, "Preach the gospel to every creature, but begin"—where? "begin at Jerusalem. There live the wretches who spat in my face. There live the cruel ones who drove the nails through my hands. Go and preach the gospel to them first. Tell them that I am able to save, not little sinners merely, but the very chief of sinners. Tell them to trust in me, and they shall live." Where are you, you despairing one? I know the devil will try to keep the sound of the gospel from your ears if he can, and therefore, I would "cry aloud and spare not." Oh, ye despairing sinners, there is no room for despair this side the gates of hell. If you have gone through the foulest kennels of iniquity, no stain can stand out against the power of the cleansing blood.

" There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose ALL their guilty stains."

Oh, I trust, now that you know there is hope for you, you will say, "I will even come at once, and put my trust in Jesus."

While I would thus encourage you to repent of your neglect of God, let me invite you to come to Jesus, and press it upon you yet again. Ah! my dear friend, you will soon be dying, and though some wicked men, in their stupid insensibility, die very calmly, and as David said, "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, but their strength is firm," yet, whether they perceive it or not, it is a dreadful thing to die with unpardoned sin hanging about you. What will your guilty soul do when it leaves the body? Think of it a minute. It is a matter worthy of your thought. Some of you, in all probability, will die this week. It is not probable that so many thousands of us will march through a whole week, and be found alive at the other end of it. Well then, as we *may* some of us go soon, and all of us *must* go ere long, let us look before us and think a bit. Imagine your soul unclothed of the body. You have left the body behind you, and your disembodied spirit finds itself in a new world. Oh, it will be a glorious thing if that separated spirit shall see Jesus whom it has loved, and fly at once into his bosom, and drink forever of the crystal fountain of ever-flowing bliss: but it will be a horrible thing if, instead of it, your naked, shivering spirit should wake up to find itself friendless, homeless, helpless, hopeless, tormented with remorse, afflicted with despair. What if it should have to cry out forever, "I knew my duty but I did it not, I knew the way of salvation but I would not run in it. I heard the gospel, but I shut my ears to it. I lived and at length left the world without Christ, and here I am, past hope, no repenting now, no believing now, no escaping now, for mercy and love no longer rule the hour." Have pity on thyself, my hearer. I have pity on thee. Oh, if my hand could pluck thee from that flame, how cheerfully would I do it! Shall I pity thee and wilt thou not pity thyself? Oh, if my pleadings should by God's grace persuade you to trust in Christ this morning, I would plead with you while voice,

and lungs, and heart, and life held out! But oh, have pity on thyself! Pity that poor naked spirit which so soon will be quivering with utmost agony, a self-caused agony, an agony from which it would not escape, an agony of which it was warned, but which it chose to endure sooner than give up: sin and yield to the sceptre of sovereign grace.

I would fain hope that you are saying, "I do now repent, and by God's grace I will go." If so, let me tell you there are a great many in heaven who once, like you, said, "I will not," but they afterwards repented and are now saved. I will give you one picture. Yonder, I see a company of men on horseback, and there is one, the proudest of them all, to whom they act as a guard; they are going to Damascus, that he may take Christians to prison and compel them to blaspheme. Saul of Tarsus is the name of that cruel, murderous persecutor. When Stephen was put to death God said to this man Saul, "Go, work in my vineyard," but Saul said plainly, "I will not," and to prove his enmity, he helped to put Stephen to death. There he is riding in hot haste, upon his evil errand, none more set and determined against the Lord. Yet my Lord Jesus can tame the lion, and even make a lamb of him. As he rides along, a bright light is seen, brighter than the sun at noonday; he falls from his horse, he lies trembling on the ground, and he hears a voice out of heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Lifting up his eyes with astonishment, he sees that he had ignorantly been persecuting the Son of God. What a change that one discovery wrought in him. That voice, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," broke his hard heart, and won him to the cause. You know how three days after that, that once proud and bigoted man was baptized upon profession of the faith of Christ, whom he had just now persecuted! and if you want to see an earnest preacher, where can you find a better than the apostle Paul, who, with heart on fire, writes again and again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus

Christ." I hope there is a Saul here, who is to be struck down this morning. Lord, strike him down! Eternal Spirit strike him down *now*! You did not know, perhaps, that you had been fighting God, but you thought the religion of Jesus to be a foolish dream. You did not know that you had insulted the dying Saviour; now you do know it, may your conscience be affected, and from this day forth may you serve the Lord.

I must leave this second point when I have just said this. If there be one here who after a long refusal, at last relents, and is willing to become a servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, let me tell him for his encouragement, he shall not be one whit behind those who have been so long making a profession without being true to it, for the text says, "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom;" but what else? "Go into the kingdom" *before* those who made a profession of serving God, but who were not true to it. You great sinners shall have no back seats in heaven! There shall be no outer court for you. You great sinners shall have as much love as the best, as much joy as the brightest of saints. You shall be near to Christ; you shall sit with him upon his throne; you shall wear the crown; your fingers shall touch the golden harps; you shall rejoice with the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. Will ye not come? Christ forgets your past ill manners, and bids ye come to-day. "Come," saith he, "unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thirty years of sin shall be forgiven, and it shall not take thirty minutes to do it in. Fifty, sixty, seventy years of iniquity shall all disappear as the morning's hoar-frost disappears before the sun. Come and trust my Master, hiding in his bleeding wounds.

"Raise thy downcast eyes, and see
 What throngs his throne surround!
 These, though sinners once like thee,
 Have full salvation found

“Yield not then to unbelief;
He says, ‘There yet is room :
Though of sinners thou art chief,
Since Jesus calls thee, come.”

II. Bear with me a little time while I speak to the second character, THE DECEPTIVELY SUBMISSIVE, by far the most numerous everywhere in England, probably the most numerous in this assembly. Oh ! you, my own regular hearers, you who have heard my voice these thirteen years, many of you are in this class. You have said to the Great Father, “I go, sir !” but you have not gone. Let me sorrowfully sketch your portraits : you have regularly frequented a place of worship, and you would shudder to waste a single Sunday in an excursion, or in any form of Sabbath breaking. Outwardly you have said, “I go, sir.” When the hymn is given out, you stand up and sing, and yet you do not sing with the heart. When I say, “Let us pray !” you cover your faces, but you do not pray with real prayer. You utter a polite, respectful “I go, sir,” but you do not go. You give a notional assent to the gospel. If I were to mention any doctrine, you would say, “Yes, that is true. I believe that.” But your heart does not believe : you do not believe the gospel in the core of your nature, for if you did, it would have an effect upon you. A man may say, “I believe my house is on fire,” but if he goes to bed and falls to sleep, it does not look as if he believed it, for when a man’s house is on fire he tries to escape. If some of you really believed that there is a hell, and that there is a heaven, as you believe other things, you would act very differently from what you now do. I must add that many of you say, “I go, sir,” in a very solemn sense, for when we preach earnestly the tears run down your cheeks, and you go home to your bedrooms, and you pray a little, and everybody thinks that your concern of mind will end in conversion ; but your goodness is “like the morning cloud and the early dew.” You are like dunghills with snow upon them ; while the

snow lasts you look white and fair, but when the snow melts the dunghill remains a dunghill still. Oh, how many very impressible hearts are like that ! You sin, and yet you come to a place of worship, and tremble under the word ; you transgress, and you weep and transgress again ; you feel the power of the gospel after a fashion, and yet you revolt against it more and more. Ah ! my friends, I can look some of you in the face and know that I am describing some of your cases to the letter. You have been telling lies to God all these years, by saying, “I go, sir,” while you have not gone. You know that to be saved you must believe in Jesus, but you have not believed. You know that you must be born again, but you are still strangers to the new birth. You are as religious as the seats you sit on, but no more ; and you are as likely to get to heaven as those seats are, but not one whit more ; for you are dead in sin, and death cannot enter heaven. Oh, my dear hearers, I lament that ever I should be called to say such a thing as this, and not be more affected by the fact ; and, wonder of wonders, that you, some of you, know it to be true, and yet do not feel alarmed thereby ! It is the easiest thing in the world to impress some of you by a sermon, but, I fear me, you never will get beyond mere transient impressions. Like the water when lashed, the wound soon heals. You know, and you know, and you know ; and you feel, and feel, and feel again, and yet your sins, your self-righteousness, your carelessness, or your wilful wickedness, cause you, after having said, “I go, sir,” to forget the promise and lie unto God.

Now, I spoke very honestly to the other class, and must be equally plain with you. You, too, *criminate yourselves*. There will be no need of witnesses against you. You have admitted that the gospel is true. You did not quarrel with the doctrine of future punishment or future glory. You attended a place of worship, and you said that God was good and worthy to be served ; you confessed that you owed allegiance to him, and ought to render it. You have even

knelt down and in prayer, you have said, "Lord, I deserve thy wrath." The great God has only to turn to some of your former prayers to find quite enough evidence to secure your condemnation. Those morning prayers of yours, those evening prayers, hypocritical every one of them, will be more than sufficient to condemn you out of your own mouth. Take heed ! take heed, I pray you, while you are yet in the land of hope.

All this while, as the thirty-second verse reminds me, while you have remained unsaved, you have seen publicans and harlots saved by the very gospel which has had no power upon you. Do not you know it, young man ? You, I mean, the son of a godly mother ? You know that you are not saved, and yet you had a drunken workman in your father's employment, and he has been these last few years a sober Christian man, he is saved, and you perhaps have taken to the habits which he has forsaken. You know that there have been picked off of the streets poor fallen women who have been brought to know Christ, who are among the sweetest and fairest flowers in Christ's garden now, though they were once castaways ; and yet some of you respectable people who never committed any outward vice in your lives, are still unconverted, and still saying to Christ, "I go, sir," but you have not gone. You are still without God ! Without Christ ! Lost, lost, lost ! Yet fairer outward characters could scarcely be found. I could fain weep for you ! Oh ! beware, beware of being like the apples of Sodom, which are green to look upon, but when crushed, crumble to ashes. Beware of being like John Bunyan's trees that were green outside, but inwardly rotten, and only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box. Oh ! beware of saying as some of you do, "I go, sir," while you go not. I sometimes see sick people who quite alarm and distress me. I say to them, "My dear friend, you are dying ; have you a hope ?" There is no answer. "Do you know your lost state ?" "Yes, sir." "Christ died for sinners." "Yes, sir." "Faith

gives us of his grace." "Yes, sir." They say, "Yes, sir ; yes, sir ; yes, sir ; yes, sir ; yes, sir." I sometimes wish before God they would contradict me, for if they would but have honesty enough to say, "I do not believe a word of it I should know how to deal with them. Stubborn oaks are levelled by the gale, but those who bend like the willow before every wind, what wind shall break them ? Oh, dear brethren, beware of being gospel-hardened ; or, what is the same thing, softened but for a season. Beware of being a promising hearer of the word, and nothing more !

I do not mean to close my discourse by speaking to you in this apparently harsh way, which, harsh as it seems, is full of love to your soul. I have a good word for *you* too. I trust that you, in this Agricultural Hall, will have a change wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, for although these many years you have made false professions before God ; there is yet room in his gospel feast for you. Do you notice the text ? "The publicans and sinners enter into the kingdom of heaven *before you*." Then it is clear you may come after them, because it could not be said they entered *before* you, if you did not come after them. If the Lord shall break your heart, you will be willing to take the Lord Jesus for your all in all just the same way as a drunkard must, though you have not been a drunkard. You will be willing to rest in the merit of Jesus just as a harlot must, though you have never been such. There is room for you, young people, yet, though you have broken your vows, and quenched your convictions. Ay, and you gray-headed people may be brought yet, though you have lived so long in the outward means, but have never given up your hearts to Jesus. Oh, come ! This twenty-fourth day of March, may the Lord bring you. In this very place may the Lord lead you to say silently, "By the grace of God I will not be an open pretender any longer ; I will give myself up to those dear hands that bled for me, and that dear heart that was pierced for me, and I will this day submit to Jesus' ways."

The fact is, to close the subject, there is, dear friends, the same gospel to be preached to one class of men as to every other class. I pray God the day may never come when we shall be found in our preaching talking about working classes, and middle classes, and upper classes. I know no difference between you, you are the same to me when I preach the gospel, whether you are kings and queens, or crossing-sweepers ; satin and cotton, broadcloth and fastian, are alike to the gospel. If you are peers of the realm, we trim not our gospel to suit you, and if you are the basest of thieves, we do not exclude you from the voice of mercy. The gospel comes to men as sinners, all equally fallen in Adam, equally lost and ruined by sin. I have not one gospel for her Majesty the Queen, and another gospel for the beggar-woman. No, there is but one way of salvation, but one foundation, but one propitiation, but one gospel. Look to the cross of Christ and live. High was the brazen serpent lifted, and all that Moses said was, "Look." Was a prince of the house of Judah bitten, he was told to look ; without looking his lion standard of costly emblazonry could not avail him ; was some poor wretch in the camp bitten, he must look, and the efficacy was the same for him as for the greatest of the host. Look ! look ! look to Jesus. Believe in the Son of God and live ! One brazen serpent for all the camp, one Christ for all ranks and conditions of men. What a blessing it would be if we were all enabled to trust Christ this morning ! My brethren, why not ? He is worthy of the confidence of all. The Spirit of God is able to work faith in all. O poor sinner, look to him ! Dear hearers, I may never speak to some of you again, and I would therefore be pressing with you ; by the hour of death, by the solemnities of eternity, I do implore and beseech you accept the only remedy for sin which even God himself will ever offer to the dying sons of men, the remedy of a bleeding Substitute, suffering in your room and stead, believed on and accepted in the heart. Cast yourself flat

upon Christ. The way of salvation is just this—rest alone upon Christ! Depend wholly upon him. The negro was asked what he did, and he said, “I jest fall down on de rock, and he dat is down on de rock cannot fall no lower.” Down on the rock, sinner! Down on the rock! The everlasting rock of ages! You cannot fall lower than that. I will conclude with a well-known illustration. Your condition is like that of a child in a burning house, who, having escaped to the edge of a window, hung on by the window-sill. The flames were pouring out of the window underneath, and the poorlad would soon be burnt, or falling would be dashed to pieces; he therefore held on with the clutch of death. He did not dare to relax his grasp till a strong man stood underneath, and said, “Boy! drop! drop! I’ll catch you.” Now, it was no saving faith for the boy to believe that the man was strong—that was a good help towards faith—but he might have known that and yet have perished; it was faith when the boy let go and dropped down into his big friend’s arms. There are you, sinner, clinging to your sins or to your good works. The Saviour cries, “Drop! drop into my arms!” It is not doing, it is leaving off doing. It is not working, it is trusting in that work which Jesus has already done. Trust! that is the word, simple, solid, hearty, earnest trust. Trust and it will not take an hour to save you, the moment you trust you are saved. You may have come in here as black as hell, but if you trust in Jesus you are wholly forgiven. In an instant, swifter than a flash of lightning the deed of grace is done. Oh may God the Spirit do it now, bringing you to trust, that you may be saved.

SERMON XIII.

EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF.

“I HAVE SURELY HEARD EPHRAIM BEMOANING HIMSELF THUS ; THOU HAST CHASTISED ME, AND I WAS CHASTISED, AS A BULLOCK UNACCUSTOMED TO THE YOKE : TURN THOU ME, AND I SHALL BE TURNED ; FOR THOU ART THE LORD MY GOD.”—Jeremiah **xxxi.** 18.

THE heathen described their fabled deity, Jove, as sitting far aloft, regardless of the common affairs of this lower world. Upon a few kings and princes he might turn an observant eye, but the most of men were creatures far too insignificant to affect the mind of Jove. Whether they lived or died was nothing to him ; they fulfilled their destinies, and passed away, while Jove remained serenely still, or nodded as his august will might be. Not such is Jehovah, the God of Heaven and of earth. He compasses our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. “The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” He regardeth the cries of the afflicted. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.” Though he is so great a God that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he deigns to dwell with the man who is of a contrite and humble Spirit. God has not left us as the ostrich leaves her young. Say not that we are left without a friend to care for us : our Maker has not gone away ; he has not shut up the gates of heaven ; he has not closed his ear from hearing, neither has he restrained his hand from helping us ; still

does he hear his Ephraims when they bemoan themselves, and send them the mercy for which they pine.

Let us conceive, as far as may be, of the nearness of God to every mourning soul, for it is marvellous and worthy of admiration. When Her Majesty, some months ago, heard of the desolation which had been caused by an accident in the pits, her tender heart hastened to the relief of the widow and the fatherless, but at the moment of the calamity she was not on the spot in person; she could not be in the pit to hear the groans and sustain the faith of the dying, nay she could not be in the cottage to mark the tear of the widow and to cheer her with heavenly promises; but our God is on the spot where calamity occurs, for in him we live and move and have our being. He is the greatest of comforters, and he is also the most approachable. He is "a very present help in time of trouble." He needs no messengers to bear to him the news of our grief or penitence, for he is not far from any of us. Mourner, your sigh is known to God as soon as you have heaved it, nay, before your grief thus found a vent he saw it struggling within. Ay, and the grief which you cannot express in words God can see and interpret. He knows the language of our grief, the meaning of our tears. Blessed be the ever present God that he is upon the spot where the bemoanings of penitents are heard, and bends a gracious ear to the cry of his children. This morning my first desire is that each of us may feel that God is here, and may be reached by us; that whatever our condition of mind may be the Lord is well aware of it, and that if there should be caused by this service even so much as the faintest ripple of a desire towards him, he will note it in his book, and if that desire should increase into a wave of prayer it will not be lost upon him. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

I shall now, as I am strengthened by God, first ask your kind attention to *a sinner bemoaning himself*; secondly, I shall wish you to remember *God as hearing him*; and thirdly,

our largest subject probably will be, *God fulfilling the desire of that bemoaning penitent, and turning him effectually from his sins.*

I. First, observe carefully, A SINNER BEMOANING HIMSELF.

Last Sunday we preached upon two sinners, but we had little or no bemoaning. One of them said, "I will not go," and the other who said, "I go, sir," went not. We are a stage further this morning; we introduce to you one whose heart has been affected by grace, whose conscience has been awakened, whose soul has been quickened, and we find him, according to the expressive word of the text, "bemoaning himself." The very word is doleful to the ear—it reminds us of the mourning of doves; we cannot pronounce it without feeling that it reveals a depth of sorrow. It is a word which tells of pain, anguish, fear, restlessness, sad remembrances, terrible forebodings, and raging desires. Ephraim was heard "*bemoaning himself.*"

Viewing the sorrow before us, we note that he who bemoaned himself was bowed down with a *peculiar grief*. He did not lament for his children with the bitter weeping of Rachel; he did not mourn over friends and kinsfolk withered under the blast of death; he was not as one crying out through pangs of bodily pain, because a limb was crushed, or a bone was broken; he bemoaned himself, but not because he had lost his goods; not because the ship had foundered at sea, or the house was wrapped in flames, or his riches had taken to themselves wings and flown away. No; his sorrow was of another kind. He bemoaned himself with a more mysterious and more bitter grief. The cause of the sorrow lay within: he was "*bemoaning himself.*" This is, I say, a peculiar sorrow—one which the most of men look down upon with scorn. I pray God, my hearers, that you may not be strangers to it; for, unless you bemoan yourselves, you shall never make the angels merry, for their re-

joicing is over “one sinner that *repenteth*.” There is no weight of glory for those who have never mourned the weight of sin. If you have never bemoaned yourself, you have never enjoyed peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The sorrow of the text is that of a soul visited by God the Holy Ghost—the inward grief of a man who has been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is bitter sorrow, but so blessed are its results, that I will call it a bitter sweet : it brings darkness with it, but it is the darkness of the last hour of the night which heralds the dawn of the day.

Godly sorrow is *well-founded sorrow*. I will try to describe its sources. When a sinner bemoans himself in this way, “Alas! alas!” saith he, “I have found out that all is true which I have oftentimes been told by God’s ministers. I have indeed offended my Maker. I have grieved the God who gave me my being ; I have made my best friend to be my enemy because of my sin ; I have set myself in opposition to the King of kings. I cannot fight it out with him, for he is too great for me : what shall I do ? Whither shall I fly ? It is surely true and just that he should punish me ; and woe is me, for I cannot bear his anger ; if my ribs were iron and my flesh were granite, I should dissolve in the heat of his wrath. I can no more resist him than tow can stand against the fire, or stubble against the flame. Woe is me ! I have roused Omnipotence to be mine enemy ! I have set all heaven in array against me ! I cannot resist, and I cannot escape—what then shall I do ? Shall I promise that I will be better. Alas ! my reformation cannot blot out my past sins, for my old offences will still demand a punishment even if I commit no more. But worse and worse, I now discover that my nature is full of sin, and will rebel continually. Thorns and thistles will grow in the accursed soil of my heart, let me do what I will to pluck them up by the roots. I am not only thus an enemy to God by my actions, but by my very nature. Woe is me ! Can the Ethiopian change his

skin or the leopard his spots? Then might I, who have been accustomed to evil, learn to do well. Alas! I am a traitor to my God, a stranger to peace and happiness, a slave to sin, in bondage to evil." To the mind in this state it is no wonder if the thought occurs, "Oh, that I had never been born! Would to God I had been created a dog or a toad sooner than have become a sinful man, for I see my end, my dreadful end! I shall march on from bad to worse, and when I shall die, the wrath of God will come upon me to the uttermost. Forever shall I be banished from all hope of happiness. I cannot endure the wrath to come. Whither shall I fly, or what shall I do? If I try to pray, my lips refuse to express my heart's desires—nay, I cannot tell what to desire nor how to pray. Alas! alas! I am undone indeed! I am lost! lost! lost! Would God that there were mercy for me." There is good ground in the sinner's state for all his bemoaning. The fears to which I have given utterance are all reasonable and well-grounded; fears so truly the offspring of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience that if, dear hearer, you have never felt them, I pray that you may do so before yon sun has set.

This sorrow is *humble sorrow*. Notice, it is not written, "I hear Ephraim excusing himself," or "flattering himself," or "making new resolutions," but, "I have heard him bemoaning himself." When God the Holy Spirit gives genuine conviction of sin to a man, how he changes in his own esteem! He finds that all his righteousnesses are just a bundle of filthy rags; he thought them to be clean, white vestments, fair as the robes of the redeemed in heaven, and he was proud to think of arraying himself in them; but when he unpacked them in the daylight he saw them to be full of holes, reduced to rags and tatters, and, what was worse, polluted with horrible filth: so he threw them all away and fell to bemoaning himself. An awakening conscience does not say, "I could not help it, it was my nature; I was led into it by my passions; I was tempted by my

circumstances;" no, it gives up all excuses because it sees their hollowness. "I sinned," says the man, "I knew it was sin; I chose it wilfully; I might have avoided it, but I would not; I set darkness for light and light for darkness; I am a wilful offender." Instead of laying a flattering unction to his soul, he sees sin to be exceeding sinful and laments it. My hearers, am I describing some of you? I trust, before the Lord, some of you can see your own photographs here, and if so, I have joyful news from the Lord for you, for broken hearts shall be bound up by the Lord Jesus himself, and eternal life shall be given you if you rest in him.

Please to notice that this sorrow was *thoughtful sorrow*, for Ephraim reviews his past life—"Thou hast chastised me." What came of it? Why, "I was chastised," and that was all. Are there not some of you in this Hall who might say, "Great God, thou thyself must deal with me, for none but thyself can ever save me. I have been laid upon a bed of sickness and I have recovered from it, and there was an end of the sickness, I was none the better for it. I lost my wife, I buried my children, I have suffered hard blows, but that is all; all my afflictions have produced no good result. Lord, I have had sickness after sickness, but I am rather worse than better, "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, beaten but not subdued, smitten but still obstinate." The more the untrained bullock is goaded the more it kicks, and it will not wear the yoke with patience. Have you not been like it? When you have heard a sermon you have laughed at it; when your mother's tears have fallen for you, you have despised them; when your wife's prayers have gone up to heaven, you have turned them into ridicule; you have been chastised and chastised, but no good has followed it. Some of you have wearied the Lord with your iniquities, till he asks, "What shall I do unto you?" Take heed, for patience endures not forever; the Lord will not always plough upon a rock; he will not always sow upon the thankless sand. "For the

earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned.” I trust that many of you are sensible that no outward providences, persuasions, or preachings, will suffice to save you, you need effectual grace to convert your soul, or you will perish forever.

I beg you to notice the bemoaning of the text in one more respect, namely, that it was *hopeless and yet hopeful*. Ephraim says, “Lord, it is of no use to chastise me, for I only get worse ; but do thou turn me, and I shall be turned.” I was staying one day at an inn in one of the valleys of Northern Italy, where the floor was dreadfully dirty. I had it in my mind to advise the landlady to scrub it, but when I perceived that it was made of mud, I reflected that the more she scrubbed the worse it would be. The man who knows his own heart soon perceives that his corrupt nature admits of no improvement ; there must be a new nature implanted, or the man will be only “washed to deeper stains.” “Ye must be born again.” Ours is not a case for mending, but for making new. The meaning of the prayer in my text is, “Lord, do not chastise me, but turn me. Do *thou* do it thyself, and then it will be done. ‘Turn me, and I shall be turned,’ but if thou dost not do it I am past hope.” O troubled soul, if the Lord shall put his hand to the work this morning, what a wonderful change will he work in thee ; but only his own right hand can do it. Pray, then, this prayer : “Turn me, and I shall be turned.”

“No outward forms can make *you* clean,
Your leprosy lies deep within.”

No resolvings of yours can cleanse you any more than the Ethiopian can make himself white by resolving to be so ; but the Holy Ghost can purify you with the blood of Jesus. He who gives life to the dead can give spiritual life to you.

He can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I invite you, therefore, to pray, "Turn me, O God, and I shall be turned;" and I bid you exercise the appropriating grace of faith and say, "for thou art the Lord my God." Are you made willing to take Jehovah to be your God to-day, my hearer? Are you willing to give up the world, its pleasures and its gains? Are you willing to give up self, fashion, pomp, self-indulgence, and sin in every shape? If you are, then I beseech you wait not till you get home, but, standing or sitting where you now are, let Ephraim's bemoaning prayer be yours: "Turn me, Lord; convert me; make a new man of me; turn me, and I shall be turned; for thou canst do it so that it will be well done, thoroughly done, effectually done, permanently done, unhesitatingly done. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned, even I. Though I have been set on mischief; though none beside could ever move my flinty soul; though I was so dogged and resolved that one might as well have tried to rule the winds or command the tempest as to curb my will; yet, Lord, thou canst do it." I see at this moment some of you dashing at full speed down the hill like wild horses, and none can restrain you. In vain we may call to you, in vain we throw fences across the road, you overleap every barrier, determined to be lost. But let Almighty grace interpose, let the Lord himself appear; he can twist his hand in the neck which seemed clothed with thunder; he can throw back the maddened steed; he can thrust the bit of grace into its foaming mouth, and constrain the once untamable being to bear the yoke of love. May such a feat of grace be performed in some sinner's heart this day.

II. I do not know where Ephraim was when he bemoaned himself, but I SEE THE LORD OBSERVING HIM.

I know not where some of you hide yourselves now that you are pricked in your conscience. Some retire to their bedrooms; some shut themselves in their closets. May a

countryman has wept behind the hedge, or climbed into a hay-loft, or leaped into a saw-pit to pray. It little matters where you seek the Lord. He will be sure to see you ; and even if it be in the crowded street of Cheapside or Cornhill, if your soul is in prayer, all the din of noisy London cannot stop the prayer from reaching the ear of God. You know, mothers, how quick you are of a night to hear your children if they are ill. If you had a nurse, she might slumber on ; but as for you, with little Jane up stairs sick, if you do fall asleep, the faintest noise awakes you ; yet you are not one-half so wakeful as God is ; for he neither slumbers nor sleeps. When your heart begins to say, "My God, my God, I would be reconciled ; my Lord, I would be cleansed," the Lord is waiting to be gracious. Before you call, God hears you, for he is a God ready to pardon.

Observe that God heard all that Ephraim had to say. I do not know that anybody else cared to do so ; and so, if you have not a Christian friend, although I am sorry for you, I would say never mind, God is enough for you without a friend. No one else might have understood Ephraim if they had heard him, but God knew all about him and he understood him well. If you cannot utter your prayer in good English, never mind, breathe it out anyhow—God can understand it. Broken prayers are best prayers. Do not suppose that you require fine words and elegant phrases in order to affect the Lord. Your tearful eye shall be more mighty than trope or metaphor, and your heavy sigh shall be more eloquent than the polished period and lofty climax of the orator. Only prostrate your soul before God with humble heart and downcast eye, and your Father will accept you. What man among you can stand against his children's tears ? When King Henry II., in the ages gone by, was provoked to take up arms against his ungrateful and rebellious son, he besieged him in one of the French towns, and the son, being near unto death, desired to see his father and confess his wrongdoing ; but the stern old sire refused to

look the rebe' in the face. The young man, being sorely troubled in his conscience, said to those about him, "I am dying ; take me from my bed, and let me lie in sackcloth and ashes, in token of my sorrow for my ingratitude to my father." Thus he died, and when the tidings came to the old man outside the walls, that his boy had died in ashes, repentant for his rebellion, he threw himself upon the earth, like another David, and said, "Would God I had died for him." The thought of his boy's broken heart touched the heart of the father. If ye, being evil, are overcome by your children's tears, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven find in your bemoanings and confessions an argument for the display of his pardoning love through Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the eloquence which God delights in, the broken heart, and the contrite spirit. He heard and he understood all that Ephraim said, and he was moved by it. Did you note that word, "I have *surely* heard Ephraim?" As if nothing were more sure. If God should not hear the music of heaven, he would hear the prayers of penitents. If the booming of the storm and the roar of the tempest, when the thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies ; if the clapping of the thousand hands of the roaring sea when it rejoices in its strength should not be heard by the eternal ear, yet, *surely*, the bemoanings of a sinner should be regarded. The crash of thunder is to the Lord no more than the sound of the falling of a sere leaf on a still summer's eve ; but the cry of one of his children peals through heaven, and moves the infinite heart, so that swift on wings of love the God of mercy flies. Nor is it mere pity, God gives to us practical aid. He gave to Ephraim what Ephraim asked for. Our God is full of compassion. He is a terrible God when he has to deal with sin—thunderbolts are in his hand, and the lightnings flash from his eyes of fire, "for our God is a consuming fire ;" but when he has to deal with penitents, his name is love. He rides in a chariot of mercy and holds out a silver sceptre of grace. O

seeking souls, Jehovah will hear you, through the merits of his Son. Seek ye his face, and ye shall not seek in vain.

III. Let us now turn to the third point, and view **THE LORD WORKING IN HIS EFFECTUAL GRACE.**

Beloved friends, recollect that the only turning in the world that is saving and divine is the turning of the heart. As for a mere change of notions—the turning of the head—many mistake it for conversion, but it is quite another matter. “Oh, yes!” says a man, “I used to be an Arminian, now I have become a Calvinist;” or, “I used to be a Churchman, and now I have joined the Baptists;” or, “I used to be a Papist, and I have become a Protestant.” Well, and what difference will that make, if you have not a new nature? A thief is a thief, whatever name he may bear—no change of name will make him honest. You may be quite as bad in one denomination as in another, for hypocrisy and formalism are found among all sorts of professors. If you take a raven and put it in a brass cage, or a silver cage, or a golden cage, it is a raven still; and so, if you join this church or that church, unless your nature is changed, you are an unsaved sinner. Let me add that, though it is a useful thing to have the outward conversation changed, yet that is not enough. It is a great blessing when a drunkard becomes a teetotalter; it is a great blessing when the thief becomes honest; it is a great blessing when any vice is given up, and the opposite virtue is carried out; but that is not the matter. “Ye must be born again.” All the changes that you can ever work in yourself will not avail for your entering heaven. Go to St. Paul’s cathedral and see the statues in white marble; they are not living men, and you cannot make them so. Wash them, clothe them, paint them, do what you will with them, still they cannot join in the songs or prayers of living men, because they are marble and not alive. Even so is it with you, unregenerated ones. You have no spiritual life in you;—we

would have you washed, we would have you moralized, for that is a good thing—even a corpse should be clean—but all the washing and the cleaning will not make you live; you must have the divine influence from on high. No turning is good for any thing everlastingly, except the renewing of the inward nature by a work of grace in the soul. How is this done? This is the work, this is the difficulty! I will show you God's mode of working as briefly as I can.

The Lord's way of turning a man in the main is much as follows, but the exact method varies in each case. If a man be going on in any one road, and you want to turn him, the first thing is to stop him. What would one of you think if to-morrow as you were walking to your labor, you should suddenly see the earth open before you as though a volcano had split open the earth from its lowest depths? I warrant you you would go no further in that way; you would stand with hair on end, and gaze down into the dread abyss, or fly back in alarm. This is exactly what happened to me when God turned *me*. I went on easy enough in my sins; I thought them pleasant, and that I should continue in them—till by God's grace I came to feel that hell was a real thing, and that I was on the brink of it. I saw clearly that if the brittle thread of my life were snapped, infinite misery would be my portion, in the place where fiends forever bite their bonds of iron, unable to escape or to endure! Oh, how *a distinct sight of wrath to come* stops a man! How he pauses when he perceives in his own soul, that the wages of sin are death. A sight of the everlasting burnings makes him cry "halt!" and though before he went on gayly dancing to destruction, he now waits awhile, puts his finger to his brow, takes counsel with his cooler judgment, and says to himself, "How now! What shall I do?" When a man is awakened by the Holy Spirit to feel that hell is his just desert, it is no wonder that his mind is turned from the love of sin to a perfect horror of it. "Oh!" saith he, "if hell is kindled by my sin, how can I

love the sin which prepared such wrath for me?" The old naturalist, Ulysses Androvaldus, tells us, that a dove is so afraid of a hawk, that she will be frightened at the sight of one of its feathers. Whether it be so or not, I cannot tell ; but this I know, that when a man has had a thorough shaking over the jaws of hell, he will be so afraid of sin, that even one of the feathers of it, any one sin, will alarm and send a thrill of fear through his soul. This is a part of the way by which the Lord turns us when we are turned indeed.

Furthermore, the awakened conscience is led to *see the real nature of sin*. We have all seen bears in a pit, and lions in stone, and have seen them without alarm ; but I can readily imagine that if a lion were suddenly to leap from my platform into the midst of this throng, you would regard it with a very different eye. A wild beast let loose among you would be a very different thing from what it is in a picture or a statue. Now, sin, as the preacher talks of it, is to most of you like a painted lion ; but when a man feels it in his own soul as a living evil full of mischief, it is a very different thing. We are like the man in the fable, who warmed a frozen viper in his bosom ; but when it came to life he knew its poisonous nature, for he felt the venom in his veins. Men, before God quickens them, nurse the viper of sin in their bosom, and say, "Look at its azure scales ; how fair it is to look upon ! Do you suppose so harmless a creature could ever do me injury ?" They put it in their bosoms with much fondness ; but when it bites them, and the hot poison runs through their veins, and conscience is thoroughly awakened, then they loathe it and cast it from them, or rather would do so if they could ; but as Laocoon, in the old story, tried in vain to tear the serpent's coils from his limbs, so is it with them until grace comes to their aid. At any rate, a true sight of sin soon turns a man most thoroughly from his former love of it. There once lived a great religious impostor, of whom it is said—

"O'er his features hung
 The veil, the silver veil which he had flung
 In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight
 His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light."

When that veil was at last uplifted, the foulest leprosy was seen. So sin comes to men covered with its silver veil, and it whispers with softest accents sweet as music, "Trust me, I cannot deceive you; I bring you richest joys; see how the cup sparkles, how the wine moveth itself aright; how merry is the dance; how joyous is the chambering and the wantonness;" but ah! when once that silver veil comes off, and sin's leprous brow is seen, then man, enlightened by his God, turns from it, crying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." As Jehu said of Jezebel, "Throw her down," so do men abhor the accursed thing that by her witchcrafts could lead their souls to destruction. A sight of hell and a sense of sin are great means in the hands of God to turn the sinner from his ways.

The grand turning-point I have not come to yet—it is *a sight of Christ on the cross*. If you ever, by the eye of faith, see Jesus Christ dying for you, sin will never be sweet to you again. What was it slew our blessed Lord? It was our sin—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
 His chief tormentors were;
 Each of my crimes became a nail,
 And unbelief the spear."

When we discover that our iniquities put our dearest and best friend to death, we vow revenge against our iniquities and henceforth hate them with a perfect hatred. Let me illustrate this very simply. Here is a knife, with a richly-carved ivory handle, a knife of excellent workmanship. Yonder woman, we will suppose, has had a dear child murdered by a cruel enemy. This knife is hers, she is pleased with it, and prizes it much. How can I make her throw that knife away? I can do it easily, for that is the knife with which her child was killed. Look at it; there is blood still upon

the handle. She drops it as though it were a scorpion ; she cannot bear it. "Put it away," saith she, "it killed my child ! Oh, hateful thing !" Now, sin is such a thing : we play with it till we are told it was sin that killed the Lord Jesus, who died out of love to us—pure, disinterested love. Then we say, "Hateful thing, get thee gone ! How can I endure thee ?" Remember how Mark Antony stirred up the Romans to a fury against Cæsar's murderers. Holding up the mantle of dead Cæsar, he pointed to the rents and gashes in the garment—

"In this place ran Cassius' dagger through ;

Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed."

And thus he inflamed the multitude to such a pitch of fury that they snatched up the seats around them, and away they went to the houses of the conspirators to set them on a blaze. Ah ! if my lips could speak as my heart bids them, I would cry, See there the wounds of the Son of God ; behold the crimson stains which mark his blessed body ; mark the thorn-crown ; gaze upon the pierced hands ; weep over the nailed feet ; see the deep gash which the lance made in his side ! Sin did this cruel work, this bloody deed ! Down with our sins ; drag them to the cross ; slay them at Calvary ; let not one of them escape, for they are the murderers of Christ ! This is the way in which the Lord turns the sinner, and he is turned indeed.

Further, one of the most blessed ways by which God makes the sinner turn is this : *he manifests his everlasting love to him.* You remember the fable of the traveller going along, wrapped up in his cloak, and the contest between the wind and the sun as to which should get his cloak from him. The wind blustered and blew, with a cold, driving rain, but the traveller wrapped his cloak about him the more tightly, and went shivering on his journey ; the wind could not tear away the garment. Then the genial sun burst forth, and shone full upon the traveller's face, it dried his garments and cheered him with its warmth ; by and by the

traveller loosed his cloak, and at last threw it off; the sun's kindness had won the day. Now, when God's law blusters about a sinner, it sometimes happens that he says, "I will go on in my sins," but when God's love comes, who can stand it? "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," says God to the sinner. "Is it so?" cries the renewed heart, "then, Lord, I cannot be thine enemy any longer." Oh! if some of you did but know that God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, if you did but know that you are his darlings, his favorites, that he gave his own Son to die for you; oh! if you did but know that your name, your worthless name, is written upon the hands of Christ, would you not love him then? I pray that he may reveal that love to you to-day, and if he does you will sing—

"Thy mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

When this sense of love has done its work, new loves and new desires fill the soul, and the man is a new man. Some worldings cannot make out why Christians abstain from certain pleasures. "Why," say they, "I am not going to deny myself of every pleasure!" Do not you know, my dear friends, that it is no denial to us to go without sin? It is no denial to the sheep to live without licking blood, because the sheep would dread the sight of blood; it desires the sweet green grass, but does not care for garbage. So when God gives us new hearts and right spirits, we do not find it a denial to renounce sin: our tastes are changed, our new loves and our new desires are not those of our former estate. There may be a gentleman here who has risen in the world; he was once a farmer's boy, but now he rides in his carriage. When he was a farmer's boy, he used to think what a grand thing it would be to be a king, and swing on a gate and eat bacon all day long; but now I will be bound to say he does

not want to swing on a gate, and has little relish for the rustic dainty of which he was once so fond ; he has reached a different rank of society, and his tastes and habits are all different. So it is with the Christian ; God makes a king of him, and how can he go back to play with beggars ? God has put a heavenly nature into him, and he abhors to grovel in the dust of sin. Dear friends, I would to God that you might know your standing in Christ, sons of God, heirs with Christ, joint heirs with him ; and when you do, it will turn you away from the base things of sin and you will be turned indeed.

Once more, and I shall not detain you. There is something which binds the Christian very fast to holiness, and restrains him from sin, and that is, the *prospect of yon bright world to which he is wending his way*. This week I had my faith much strengthened in visiting a sick woman. I would fain change places with her. Glad enough should I be to lie upon that sick bed and die in her room ; for though she has been long on the borders of the grave, and knows it,—knows that each hour may probably be the last, her joy is so great, her bliss is so abundant, that you have only to speak with her and her joy overflows.

She said to me, “ I prayed that if God would spare me, he would give me one soul, and he has given me five converts while I have been on this bed ;” and I did not wonder at it, as I saw the five dear friends sitting in the room ; I did not wonder at it—it was enough to make one a Christian to see her joy and her peace, and hear her talk so confidently about the time when she should see her Lord and be in his embrace forever. “ Ah !” says the devil to the Christian, “ I will give you so much if you sin.” Our reply is, “ What could you give me compared with my inheritance ? O fiend, thou bringest me counterfeit riches, but I can count down ten thousand times as much in real solid gold ! Thou profferest me thy paste gems, but here are diamonds and pearls of the first water and of the rarest value ! Out on thee, thou tempt-

er! thou knowest not how to tempt a Christian! for his gains are greater than any thing thou canst give him." Surely, this would turn your hearts, my hearers, if you could but know and feel the glory of our inheritance. If you had a vision of the land of the hereafter, where the birds of paradise forever sing, and the sun forever shines, and the day is never ended, surely sin would no longer enchant you. "We are on our journey home," say the host of the elect. The city which hath foundations hath turned their steps from sin, and they are turned indeed, so that they never can be turned back again.

Now I have done, but I do not like to send you away without making again the personal inquiry, Are you bemoaning yourself? Do you desire to be turned? Would you have these gracious motives operating upon you? Then do not put it off, but this moment breathe the silent prayer, "Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned." I have a great desire in my heart; I should like to tell you of it: it is that there should be more converted in this place than ever were converted at one time in any place since the world was, for never before was such an audience gathered to hear one man. Whether that desire shall be granted I do not know; but if we have faith enough for it, it may come, and it will come why should it not? Oh, that some great sinners might be saved, for they always make the best saints! Oh, that the Lord might take some of the ringleaders in the devil's army and make them lieutenants in his service! None so brave for Christ as those who were brave for sin. Ye great sinners, may great mercy meet with you! Recollect the way of salvation is this, Trust Jesus, and you shall be saved: look to him whom I have pictured just now bleeding, groaning, dying on the tree. Look, look! and live. Only depend upon him, only give your heart to him, and rest in him, and it is not possible that one should perish who comes to Jesus and puts his trust in him.

Brethren, pray for us. If you, the members of th.

church, do not pray for me, I feel I shall have much to lay to your charge. Never was any one called to so great a work as this. I have this morning twenty thousand claims upon your prayers. I beseech you by the living God pray for me. It were better for me that I never were born to have this responsibility upon me if I have not your prayers. Who can tell—the service of this morning may, when it is thought over and remembered by the hearers, bring forth fruit a hundredfold, and God shall have the glory. Do pray for me ; and, sinner, unconverted sinner, do pray for yourself, and God hear you for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

JESUS AT BETHESDA; OR, WAITING CHANGED FOR BELIEVING.

"AFTER THIS THERE WAS A FEAST OF THE JEWS; AND JESUS WENT UP TO JERUSALEM. NOW THERE IS AT JERUSALEM BY THE SHEEP MARKET A POOL, WHICH IS CALLED IN THE HEBREW TONGUE BETHESDA, HAVING FIVE PORCHES. IN THESE LAY A GREAT MULTITUDE OF IMPOTENT FOLK, OF BLIND, HALT, WITHERED, WAITING FOR THE MOVING OF THE WATER. FOR AN ANGEL WENT DOWN AT A CERTAIN SEASON INTO THE POOL, AND TROUBLED THE WATER: WHOSOEVER THEN FIRST AFTER THE TROUBLING OF THE WATER STEPPED IN WAS MADE WHOLE OF WHATSOEVER DISEASE HE HAD. AND A CERTAIN MAN WAS THERE, WHICH HAD AN INFIRMITY THIRTY AND EIGHT YEARS. WHEN JESUS SAW HIM LIE, AND KNEW THAT HE HAD BEEN NOW A LONG TIME IN THAT CASE, HE SAITH UNTO HIM, WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE? THE IMPOTENT MAN ANSWERED HIM, SIR, I HAVE NO MAN, WHEN THE WATER IS TROUBLED, TO PUT ME INTO THE POOL: BUT WHILE I AM COMING, ANOTHER STEPPETH DOWN BEFORE ME. JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM, RISE, TAKE UP THY BED, AND WALK. AND IMMEDIATELY THE MAN WAS MADE WHOLE, AND TOOK UP HIS BED, AND WALKED: AND ON THE SAME DAY WAS THE SABBATH.' —John v. 1—9.

THE scene of this miracle was Bethesda, a pool, according to the evangelist, adjoining the sheep market, or near to the sheep gate: the place through which, I suppose, the cattle consumed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be driven; and the pool where, perhaps, the sheep intended for sale to the offerers in the temple were washed. So common was sickness in the days of the Saviour, that the infirmities of men intruded upon the place which had been allotted to cattle, and the place where sheep had been washed, became the spot where sick folk congregated in great multitudes, longing for a cure. We do not hear that any one remonstrated at the intrusion, or that public opinion was shocked. The needs of mankind must override all considerations of taste. The hospital must have the preference over the sheep market. This day you have another case in

point. If the physical infirmities of Jerusalem intruded into the sheep market, I shall ask no excuse if, on these Sabbath days, the spiritual sickness of London should demand that this spacious place, which has hitherto been given up to the lowing of cattle and to the bleating of sheep,* should be consecrated to the preaching of the gospel, to the manifestation of the healing virtue of Christ Jesus among the spiritually sick. This day there is by the sheep market a pool, and impotent folk are here in exceeding great multitudes.

We might never have heard of Bethesda, if an august visitor had not condescended to honor it with his presence—Jesus, the Son of God, walked in the five porches by the pool. It was the place where we might expect to meet him, for where should the physician be found if not in the place where the sick are gathered? Here was work for Jesus' healing hand and restoring word. It was but natural that the Son of Man, who "came to seek and to save that which was lost," should make his way to the lazar-house by the side of the pool. That gracious visit is Bethesda's glory. This has lifted up the name of this pool out of the common rank of the springs and waters of the earth. Oh that King Jesus might come into this place this morning! this would be the glory of this Hall, for which it should be famous in eternity. If Jesus would be here to heal, the remarkable size of the congregation would cease to be a wonder, the renown of Jesus and his saving love would eclipse all else, as the sun puts out the stars. My brethren, Jesus will be here, for there are those who know him and have power with him, who have been asking for his presence. The Lord's favored people, by prevailing cries and tears, have won from him his consent to be in our midst this day, and he is walking amid this throng as ready to heal and as mighty to save as in the days of his flesh. "Lo, I am with you always, even

* In the Agricultural Hall the annual cattle-shows are held. *where 2000 are gathered.*

unto the end of the world," is an assurance which comforts the preacher's heart this morning. A present Saviour—present in the power of the Holy Ghost—shall make this day to be remembered by many who shall be made whole.

I ask the earnest attention of all, and I entreat of believers their fervent assisting prayers while I first bid you observe *the sick man*; secondly, direct your attentive eye to *the Great Physician*; and, thirdly, *make an application of the whole narrative to the present case.*

I. In order to observe THE PATIENT, I shall ask you to go with me to the pool with the five porches, around which the sick are lying. Walk tenderly among the groups of lame and blind! Nay, do not close your eyes. It will do you good to see the sorrowful sight, to mark what sin has done and to what sorrows our father Adam has made us heirs.

Why are they all here? They are here because sometimes the waters bubble up with a healing virtue. Whether visibly stirred by an angel or not it is not necessary for us here to discuss; but it was generally believed that an angel descended and touched the water—this rumor attracted the sick from all quarters. As soon as the stir was seen in the waters, the whole mass probably leaped into the pool—those who could not leap themselves were pushed in by their attendants. Alas! how small the result! Many were disappointed; only one was rewarded for the leap; whosoever *first* stepped in was healed, but only the first. For the poor and meagre chance of winning this cure the sick folk lingered in Bethesda's arches year after year. The impotent man in the narrative had most likely spent the better part of his thirty eight years in waiting at this famous pool, buoyed up by the slender hope that he might one day be first of the throng. On the Sabbath mentioned in the text, the angel had not come to him, but something better had come, for Jesus Christ the angel's Master, was there.

Note concerning this man that *he was fully aware of his sickness*. He did not dispute the failure of his health : he was an impotent man ; he felt it and he owned it. He was not like some present this morning, who are lost by nature, but who do not know it, or will not confess it. He was conscious that he needed heavenly help, and his waiting at the pool showed it. Are there not many in this assembly who are equally convinced on this point ? You have for a long time felt that you are a sinner, and have known that unless grace shall save you, saved you never can be. You are no atheist, no denier of the gospel ; on the contrary, you firmly believe the Bible, and heartily wish that you had a saving part in Christ Jesus ; but for the present you have advanced no further than to feel that you are sick, to desire to be healed, and to own that the cure must come from above. So far so good, but it is not good to stop here.

The impotent man thus desiring to be healed, waited by the pool, expecting some sign and wonder. He hoped that an angel would suddenly burst open the golden gates and touch the waters which were now calm and stagnant, and that then he might be healed. This, too, my dear hearers, is the thought of many of those who feel their sins and who desire salvation. They accept that unscriptural and dangerous advice given to them by a certain class of ministers ; they wait at the pool of Bethesda ; they persevere in the formal use of means and ordinances, and continue in unbelief, expecting some great thing. They abide in a continued refusal to obey the gospel, and yet expect that on a sudden they will experience some strange emotions, singular feelings, or remarkable impressions ; they hope to see a vision, or hear a supernatural voice, or be alarmed with deliriums of horror. Now, dear friends, we shall not deny that a few persons have been saved by very singular interpositions of God's hand, in a manner altogether out of the ordinary modes of divine procedure. We should be very foolish if we were for instance to dispute the truth of such a conver-

sion as that of Colonel Gardiner, who, the very night when he made an appointment to commit sin, was arrested and converted by a vision of Christ upon the cross, which, at any rate, he thought he saw, and by hearing or imagining that he heard the voice of the Saviour tenderly pleading with him. It were idle to dispute that such cases have occurred, do occur, and may occur again. I must, however, beg unconverted people not to look for such interpositions in their own cases. When the Lord bids you believe in Jesus, what right have you to demand signs and wonders instead? Jesus himself is the greatest of all wonders. My dear hearer, for you to wait for remarkable experiences is as futile as was the waiting of the multitude who lingered at Bethesda waiting for the long-expected angel, when he who could heal them stood already in their midst, neglected and despised by them. What a piteous spectacle, to see them gazing into the clouds when the physician who could heal them was present, and they offered him no petitions, and sought no mercy at his hands.

In dealing with the method of waiting to see or to feel some great thing, we remark, that *it is not the way which God has bidden his servants preach*. I challenge the whole world to find any gospel of God in which an unconverted man is told to abide in unbelief. Where is the sinner told to wait upon God in the use of ordinances, that so he may be saved? The gospel of our salvation is this—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." When our Lord gave his commission to his disciples, he said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And what was that gospel? Tell them to wait in their unbelief in the use of means and ordinances till they see some great thing? Tell them to be diligent in prayer, and read the Word of God, until they feel better? Not an atom of it. Thus saith the Lord, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This was the gospel, and the only gospel which

Jesus Christ ever bade his ministers preach; and they who say, wait for feelings! wait for impressions! wait for wonders! they preach another gospel which is not another; but there be some that trouble you. The lifting up of Christ on the cross is the saving work of the gospel ministry, and in the cross of Jesus lies the hope of men. "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," is God's gospel: "Wait at the pool," is man's gospel, and has destroyed its thousands.

This un-gospel-like gospel of waiting is *immensely popular*. I should not wonder if well nigh half of you are satisfied with it. O my hearers, you do not refuse to fill the seats in our places of worship; you are seldom absent when the doors are opened, but there you sit in confirmed unbelief, waiting for windows to be made in heaven, but neglecting the gospel of your salvation. The great command of God, "Believe and live," has no response from you but a deaf ear, and a stony heart, while you quiet your consciences with outward religious observances. If God had said "Sit in those seats and wait," I would be bold to urge it upon you with tears; but God has not said so; he has said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him." He has not said "Wait," but he has said, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." I find Jesus saying nothing to sinners about waiting, but very much about coming. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Why is this way so very popular? It is because *it administers laudanum to the conscience*. When the minister

preaches with power, and the hearer's heart is touched, the devil says, "Wait for a more convenient season." Thus the arch enemy pours this deadly drug into the soul, and the sinner, instead of trusting in Jesus on the spot, or on bended knee with tearful eye, crying for mercy, flatters himself because he is in the use of the means: which use of means is well enough as far as it goes, but which is bad as bad can be when it comes into the place of Christ crucified. A child ought to hear its parent's command, but what if the child puts hearing into the place of obeying? God forbid that I should glory in your listening to the gospel, if you are hearers only—my glory is in the cross; and unless you look to the cross, it were better for you that you had never been born.

I ask the candid attention of every one who has thus been waiting, while I mention one or two points. My dear friend, is not this waiting *a very hopeless business* after all? Out of those who waited at Bethesda, how very few were ever healed! He who stepped down *first* into the pool was cured, but all the rest came up from the pool just as they went in. Ah! my hearers, I tremble for some of you—you chapel-goers and church-goers, who have for years been waiting, how few of you get saved! Thousands of you die in your sins, waiting in wicked unbelief. A few are snatched like brands from the burning, but the most of those who are hardened waiters, wait, and wait, till they die in their sins. I solemnly warn you that, pleasing to the flesh as waiting in unbelief may be, it is not one which any reasonable man would long persevere in. For, my friend, are not you in your own person an instance of its hopelessness? You have been waiting for years; you can scarcely remember when you first went to a place of worship; your mother carried you thither in her arms, and you have been nurtured under the shadow of the sanctuary, like the swallows that build their nests under God's altars, and what has your unbelieving waiting done for you? Has it made you a

Christian? No, you are still without God, without Christ, without hope. I shall put it to you in God's name, what right have you to expect that if you wait another thirty years, you will be at all different from what you are now? Are not the probabilities most strong that at sixty you will be as graceless as you are at thirty? For, let me say it, and I dare say it without egotism, some of you have listened to the gospel preached to you in no mincing manner. My dear hearers, I have been as plain with you as I know how to be; I have never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, nor even to pick out an individual case and deal with it closely. Short of actually mentioning people's names, I have hardly stopped, but I have sought to commend the gospel to the conscience of every man as in the sight of God. Remember the warnings you had in Exeter Hall—some of you recollect the breakings down you felt in the Surrey Gardens; remember the invitations which have already come to you in this very Hall; and if all these have failed, what more is to be done in the way of hearing and waiting? Many of you have listened to other preachers, equally earnest, equally tender, perhaps more so: now, if all these have had no effect upon you, if waiting at the pool has done nothing for you, is it not a forlorn and hopeless mode of procedure? Is it not time that something better were tried than merely waiting for the troubling of the water? Is it not time that you remembered that Jesus Christ is ready to save you now, and that if you now trust in him, you shall this day have everlasting life?

There lies our poor friend, still waiting at the water's edge. I do not blame *him* for waiting, for Jesus had not been there before, and it was right for him to seize even the most slender chance of a cure; but it was sad that Jesus should have been so slighted: there he went, threading his way among the blind, and the halt, and the lame, and looking benignly upon them all, but none looking up to him. Now, in other places, soon as Jesus made his appearance

they brought the sick in their beds and laid them at his feet, and as he went along he healed them all, scattering mercies with both his hands. A blindness had come over these people at the pool ; there they were, and there was Christ, who could heal them, but not a single one of them sought him. Their eyes were fixed on the water, expecting it to be troubled ; they were so taken up with their own chosen way that the true way was neglected. No mercies were distributed, for none were sought. Ah ! my friends, my sorrowful question is, *shall it be so this morning ?* The living Christ is still among us in the energy of his eternal Spirit. Will you be looking to your good works ? Will you be trusting to your church-goings and your chapel-goings ? Will you rely upon expected emotions, impressions, and fits of terror, and let Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost, have no glimpse of faith from any eye, no prayer of desire from any heart ? If it shall be so, it is heart-breaking to think of it ; men, with an Almighty Physician in their house, dying while they are amused with a hopeless quackery of their own inventing. O poor souls, shall Bethesda be repeated here this morning, and Jesus Christ, the present Saviour, be again neglected ? If a king should give to one of his subjects a ring, and say to him, " When you are in distress or disgrace, simply send me that ring and I will do all for you that is needful," if that man should wilfully refuse to send it, but purchase presents, or go about to do some singular feats of valor in order to win his monarch's favor, you would say, " What a fool he is ; here is a simple way, but he will not avail himself of it ; he wastes his wits in inventing new devices, and toils away his life in following out plans that must end in disappointment." Is not this the case with all those who refuse to trust Christ ? The Lord has assured them that if they trust Jesus, they shall be saved ; but they go about after ten thousand imaginings, and let their God, their Saviour, go.

Meanwhile the sick man, so often disappointed, was

growing into deep despair. Moreover he was becoming *old*; for thirty-eight years is a long time out of a man's life. He felt that he should soon die. The brittle thread was nearly snapped, and so as the days and nights wearily wore on, though he waited, it became heavy work to wait. My friend, is not this your case? Life is wearing away with you. Are there not gray hairs here and there? You have waited all this while in vain, and I warn you that you have sinfully waited. You have seen others saved. Your child is saved, your wife is converted, but you are not; and you are waiting, and will wait, I fear, till to the tune of "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes," the mould shall rattle on your coffin-lid, and your soul shall be in hell. Do not, I pray you, play with time any longer. Say not "There is time enough;" for the wise man knows that time enough is little enough. Be not like the foolish drunkard who, staggering home one night, saw his candle lit for him. "Two candles!" said he, for his drunkenness made him see double, "I will blow out one," and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks that he has one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God; so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down forever. Haste thee, traveller, thou hast but one sun, and when that sets, thou wilt never reach thy home. God help thee to make haste now!

II. Let us look at the PHYSICIAN himself.

As we have already seen, our Lord on this occasion walked, forgotten and neglected, through that throng of impotent folk, no one crying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!" no struggling woman seeking to touch the hem of his garment, that she might be made whole! All were desirous of being healed, but, either no one knew or no one trusted him. What a strange, soul-sickening sight it was, for

Jesus was quite able and willing to heal, and to do it all without fee or reward, and yet none sought to him. Is this scene to be repeated this morning? Jesus Christ is able to save you, my hearers. There is no heart so hard that he cannot soften it; there is no man among you so lost that Jesus cannot save him. Blessed be my dear Master, no case ever did defeat him; his mighty power reaches beyond the uttermost of all the depths of human sin and folly. If there be a harlot here, Christ can cleanse her. If there be a drunkard or a thief here, the blood of Jesus can make him white as snow. If you have any desire towards him, you have not gone beyond the reach of his pierced hand. If you are not saved, it is certainly not for want of power in the Saviour. Moreover, your poverty is no hindrance, for my Master asks nothing from you—the poorer the wretch, the more welcome to Christ. My Master is no covetous priest, who demands pay for what he does—he forgives us freely; he wants none of your merits, nothing whatever from you; come as you are to him, for he is willing to receive you as you are. But here is my sorrow and complaint, that this blessed *Lord Jesus, though present to heal, receives no attention from the most of men*. They are looking another way, and have no eyes for him. *Yet Jesus was not angry*. I do not find that he upbraided one of those who lay in the porches, or that he even thought a hard thought of them; but I am sure that he pitied them, and said in his heart, “Alas! poor souls, that they should not know when mercy is so near!” My Master is not wrathful with you who forget him and neglect him, but he pities you from his heart. I am but his poor servant, but I pity, from my inmost heart, those of you who live without Christ. I could fain weep for you who are trying other ways of salvation, for they will all end in disappointment, and if continued in, will prove to be your eternal destruction.

Observe very carefully what the Saviour did. Looking around amongst the whole company, *he made an election*.

He had a right to make what choice he pleased, and he exercised that sovereign prerogative. The Lord is not bound to give his mercy to every one, or to any one. He has freely proclaimed it to you all; but as you reject it, he has now a double right to bless his chosen ones by making them willing in the day of his power. The Saviour selected that man out of the great multitude, we know not why, but certainly for a reason founded in grace. If we might venture to give a reason for his choice, it may be that he selected him because his was the worst case, and he had waited the longest of all. This man's case was in everybody's mouth. They said, "This man has been there eight-and-thirty years." Our Lord acted according to his own eternal purpose, doing as he pleased with his own; he fixed the eye of his electing love upon that one man, and, going up to him, he gazed upon him. He knew all his history; he knew that he had been a long time in that case, and therefore he pitied him much. He thought of those dreary months and years of painful disappointment which the impotent man had suffered, and the tears were in the Master's eyes; he looked and looked again at that man, and his bowels yearned towards him. Now, I know not whom Christ intends to save this morning by his effectual grace. I am bound to give the general call, it is all that I can do, but I know not where the Lord will give the effectual call, which alone can make the word saving. I should not wonder if he should call some of you who have been waiting long. I will bless his name if he does. I should not marvel if electing love should pitch upon the chief of sinners this day; if Jesus should look on some of you who never looked on him, until his look shall make *you* look, and his pity shall make you have pity upon yourselves, and his irresistible grace shall make you come to him that you may be saved. Jesus performed an act of sovereign, distinguishing grace. I pray you, do not kick at this doctrine! If you do, I cannot help it, for it is true. I have preached the gospel to every one of you as freely as man can

do it, and surely you who reject it ought not to quarrel with God for bestowing on others that which you do not care to receive. If you desire his mercy, he will not deny it to you ; if you seek him he will be found of you ; but if you will not seek mercy, rail not on the Lord if he bestows it upon others.

Jesus, having looked upon this man with a special eye of regard, said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" I have already hinted that this was not said because Christ wanted information, but because he wished to *arouse the man's attention*. On account of its being the Sabbath, the man was not thinking of being cured, for to the Jew it seemed a most unlikely thing that cures should be wrought on a Sabbath day. Jesus, therefore, brought his thoughts back to the matter in hand ; for, mark you, the work of grace is a work upon a conscious mind, not upon senseless matter. Though Puseyites pretend to regenerate unconscious children, by sprinkling their faces with water, Jesus never attempted such a thing—Jesus saves men who have the use of their senses—and his salvation is a work upon a quickened intellect and awakened affections. Jesus brought back the wandering mind with the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" "Indeed," the man might have said, "indeed, I desire it above all things—I long for it—I pant for it." Now, my dear hearer, I will ask the same question of you. "Wilt thou be made whole? Do you desire to be saved? Do you know what being saved is?" "Oh," say you, "it is escaping from hell." No, no, no ; that is the result of being saved, but being saved is a different thing. Do you want to be saved from the power of sin? Do you desire to be saved from being covetous, worldly-minded, bad-tempered, unjust, ungodly, domineering, drunken, or profane? Are you willing to give up the sin that is dearest to you? "No," says one, "I cannot honestly say I desire all that." Then, you are not the man I am seeking this morning : but is there one here who says, "Yes, I long to be rid of sin, root and branch : I

desire, by God's grace, this very day to become a Christian, and to be saved from sin?" Well, then, as you are already in a state of thoughtfulness, let us go a step further, and observe what the Saviour did. *He gave the word of command*, saying, "Rise! take up thy bed and walk." The power by which the man arose was not in himself, but in Jesus; it was not the mere sound of the word which made him rise, but it was the divine power which went with it. I do believe that Jesus still speaks through his ministers; I trust that he speaks through *me* at this moment, when in his name I say to you who have been waiting at the pool, wait no longer, but this moment believe in Jesus Christ! Trust him now. I know that my word will not make you do it; but if the Holy Ghost works through the word, you will believe. Trust Christ now, poor sinner. Believe that he is able to save you; believe it now! Rely upon him to save you this moment; repose upon him now! If you are enabled to believe, the power will come from him, not from you; and your salvation will be effected, not by the sound of the word, but by the secret power of the Holy Ghost which goes with that word.

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I pray you observe, that although nothing is said about faith in the text, yet the man must have had faith. Suppose you had been unable to move hand or foot for thirty-eight years, and some one said at your bedside, "Rise!" you would not think of trying to rise, you would know it to be impossible; you must have faith in the person who uttered the word, or else you would not make the attempt. I think I see the poor man—there he is, a heap, a writhing bundle of tortured nerves and powerless muscles; yet Jesus says, "Rise!" and up he rises in a moment. "Take up thy bed," says the Master, and the bed is carried. Here was the man's faith. The man was a Jew, and he knew that, according to the Pharisees, it would be a very wicked thing for him to roll up his mattress and carry it on the Sabbath; but because Jesus told him, he asked no questions, but

doubled up his couch and walked. He did what he was told to do, because he believed in him who spake. Have *you* such faith in Jesus, poor sinner? Do you believe that Christ can save you? If you do, then I say to you in his name, trust him! Trust him now! If you trust Jesus, you shall be saved this morning—saved on the spot and saved forever.

Observe, beloved friends, that *the cure which Christ wrought was perfect*. The man could carry his bed; the restoration was proved to a demonstration, the cure was manifest; all could see it. Moreover, the cure was *immediate*. He was not told to take a lump of figs, and put it on the sore and wait; he was not carried home by his friends, and laid up for a month or two, and gradually nursed into vital energy. Oh, no! he was cured there and then. Half our professing Christians imagine that regeneration cannot take place in a moment; and therefore, they say to poor sinners, “Go and lie at Bethesda’s pool, wait in the use of ordinances; humble yourself; seek for deeper repentance.” Beloved, away with such teaching! The cross? the cross! the cross! there hangs a sinner’s hope! You must not rely on what you can do, nor on what angels can do, nor on visions and dreams, nor on feelings and strange emotions, and horrible deliriums, but you must rest in the blood of my Master and my God, once slain for sinners. There is life in a look at the Crucified One, but there is life nowhere else. I come to the same point, then, upon the second head as upon the first. Thus saith the Lord, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

III. Thirdly, we have to APPLY THE INSTANCE IN THE TEXT TO THE PRESENT OCCASION.

I hope, believers, your hearts are going up in prayer this morning. What a scene is before us! If some one had told us that this mass of people would have gathered to listen to the gospel, are there not hundreds who would have doubt

ed it! Mark this, we have had nothing novel to attract this multitude; nothing by way of gorgeous ceremony; there is not even the swell of the organ: I declined its pealing notes, lest we should seem to depend in the slightest degree from a thread even to a shoe latchet, upon any thing but the preaching of the gospel. The preaching of the cross is enough to draw the people, and enough to save the people, and if we take to any thing else, we lose our power and shear away the locks which make us strong. The application of the text, this morning, is just this; Why should we not on this very spot have instantaneous cures of sick souls?

Why should there not be scores, hundreds, thousands, who shall this morning hear the gracious word, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk?" I believe it is possible. I hope it will be done. Let me talk with you who doubt this matter. You still think that you must wait—you have had a sufficient spell of waiting, and you are getting tolerably weary, but still you stick to the old plan; hopeless as it is, you still catch at it as drowning men do at straws. But I want to show you that this is all wrong. Regeneration is an instantaneous work, and justification an instantaneous gift. Man fell in a moment. When Eve plucked the fruit, and Adam ate it, it did not require six months to bring them into a state of condemnation. It did not require several years of continued sin to cast them out of paradise. Their eyes were opened by the forbidden fruit; they saw that they were naked, and they hid themselves from God. Surely, surely, Christ is not to be longer about his work than the devil was about his. Shall the devil destroy us in a moment, and Jesus be unable to save us in a moment? Ah! glory be to God, he has power to deliver far more ample than any which Satan uses for man's destruction.

Look at the *biblical illustrations* of what salvation is. I will only mention three. Noah built an ark; that was the type of salvation; now, when was Noah saved? Christ has built the ark for us, we have nothing to do with building

that; but when was Noah saved? Does any one say, "He was safe after he had been in the ark a month and had arranged all the things and looked out on the deluge and felt his danger"? No! the moment Noah went through the door, and the Lord shut him in, Noah was safe. When he had been in the ark a second he was as secure as when he had been there a month. Take the case of the passover; when were the Jews safe from the destroying angel who went through the land of Egypt? Were they safe after the blood which was sprinkled on the door had been looked upon and considered for a week or two? Oh, no! beloved, the moment the blood was sprinkled the house was secured; and the moment a sinner believes and trusts in the crucified Son of God he is pardoned at once, he receives salvation in full through Christ's blood. One more instance, the brazen serpent. When the brazen serpent was lifted up, what were the wounded to do? Were they told to wait till the brazen serpent was pushed into their faces, or until the venom of the serpent showed certain symptoms in their flesh? No, they were commanded to look. They did look. Were they healed in six months' time? I read not so, but as soon as their eye met the serpent of brass, the cure was wrought: and as soon as your eye meets Christ, poor trembler, you are saved. Though yesterday you were deep in your cups, and up to your neck in sin, yet if this morning you look to my once slain but now exalted Master, you shall find eternal life.

Again take *biblical instances*. Did the dying thief wait at the pool of the ordinances? You know how soon his believing prayer was heard, and Jesus said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The three thousand at Pentecost, did they wait for some great thing? Nay, they believed, and were baptized. Look at the jailer of Philippi. It was the dead of the night, the prison was shaken, and the jailer was alarmed, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Did Paul say, "Well, you must use the means and look for a blessing upon the ordinances"? No! he

said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house," and that very night he baptized him. Paul did not take the time about it that some think so exceedingly necessary. He believed as I do, that there is life in a look at Jesus; he bade men look, and looking they lived.

Possibly you will see this still more clearly if I remind you that *the work of salvation is all done*. There is nothing for a sinner to do in order to be saved, it is all done for him: You want washing. The bath does not need filling. "There is a fountain filled with blood." You want clothing. You have not to make the garment, the robe is ready. The garment of Christ's righteousness is woven from the top throughout, all that is wanted is to have it put on. If some work remained for you to do it might be a lengthened process, but all the doing is accomplished by Christ. Salvation is not of works, but of grace, and to accept what Christ presents you is not a work of time.

Once more, let me say to you that *regeneration itself cannot be a work of long time*, because, even where it seems to be most gradual, when looked at closely, it turns out in its essence to be the work of a moment. There is a dead man: now, if that man be raised from the dead, there must be an instant in which he was dead, and another instant in which he was alive. The actual quickening must be the work of a moment. I grant you, that at the first the life may be very feeble, but there must be a time when it begins. There must be a line—we cannot always see it ourselves, but God must see it—there must be a line between life and death. A man cannot be somewhere between dead and alive; he either is alive or he is dead; and so you are either dead in sin or alive unto God, and quickening cannot involve a long period of time.

Finally, my hearers, *for God to say "I forgive thee," takes not a century nor a year*. The judge pronounces the sentence, and the criminal is acquitted. If God shall say to

thee this morning, "I absolve thee," thou art absolved, and thou mayst go in peace. I must bear faithful witness as to my own case. I never found mercy by waiting. I never obtained a gleam of hope by depending upon ordinances. I found salvation by believing. I heard a simple minister of the gospel say, "Look and live! Look to Jesus. He bleeds in the garden, he dies on the tree! Trust him! Trust to what he suffered instead of you; and if you trust him, you shall be saved." The Lord knows I had *heard* that gospel many times before, but I had not obeyed it. It came, however, with power to my soul, and I did look, and the moment I looked to Christ, I lost my burden. "But," says one, "how do you know?" Did you ever carry a burden yourself? "Oh, yes," say you. "Did you know when it was off? How did you know?" "Oh," you say, "I felt so different. I knew when my burden was on, and, consequently, I knew when it was off." It was so in my case. I only wish some of you felt the burden of sin as I felt it, when I was waiting at the pool of Bethesda. I wonder that such waiting had not landed me in hell. But, when I heard the word, "Look!" I looked, and my burden was gone, I wondered where it was gone; I have never seen it since, and I never shall see it again. It went into the Master's tomb, and it lies forever buried there. God has said it, "I have blotted out like a cloud thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Oh, come, ye needy, come to my Master! Ho, ye that have been disappointed with rites and ceremonies, and feelings, and impressions, and all the hopes of the flesh, come at my Master's command, and look up to him! He is not here in the flesh, for he has risen; but he has risen to plead for sinners, and "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Oh, if I could know how to preach the gospel so that you would feel it, I would go to any school to learn! The Lord knows I would willingly consent to lose these eyes, to get greater power in my minis-

try; ay, and to lose arms, legs, and all my members. I would be willing to die if I could but be honored by the Holy Spirit to win this mass of souls to God. I implore you, my brethren, you who have power in prayer, pray the Lord to bring sinners to Christ. Let me say, solemnly, to you who have heard the word this day, I have told you the plan of salvation plainly; if you do not accept it, I am clear of your blood, I shake my skirts of the blood of your souls. If you come not to my Lord and Master, I must bear swift witness against you at the day of judgment. I have told you the way—I cannot tell you it more simply—I beseech you to follow it! I entreat you to look to Jesus! But if you refuse it, at any rate, when you shall rise from the dead, and stand before the great white throne, do me the justice to say that I did entreat and persuade you to escape, I did impress upon you to flee from the wrath to come. The Lord save each one of you, and his shall be the praise ever more. Amen.

SERMON XV.

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

UNTO ME, WHO AM LESS THAN THE LEAST OF ALL SAINTS, IS THIS GRACE GIVEN, THAT I PREACH AMONG THE GENTILES THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST." —Ephesians iii. 8.

THE apostle Paul felt it to be a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery, or a servitude, but he entered upon it with intense delight. All God's truly sent servants have experienced much delight in the declaration of the gospel of Jesus; and it is natural that they should, for their message is one of mercy and love. If a herald were sent to a besieged city with the tidings that no terms of capitulation would be offered, but that every rebel without exception should be put to death, methinks he would go with lingering footsteps, halting by the way to let out his heavy heart in sobs and groans; but if instead thereof, he were commissioned to go to the gates with the white flag to proclaim a free pardon, a general act of amnesty and oblivion, surely he would run as though he had wings to his heels, with a joyful alacrity, to tell to his fellow-citizens the good pleasure of their merciful king. Heralds of salvation, ye carry the most joyful of all messages to the sons of men! When the angels were commissioned for once to become preachers of the gospel, and it was but for once, they made the welkin ring at midnight with their choral songs, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They did not moan out a dolorous dirge as of those proclaiming death, but the glad tidings of great joy were set to

music, and announced with holy mirth and celestial song. "Peace on earth ; glory to God in the highest " is the joy-note of the gospel—and in such a key should it ever be proclaimed. We find the most eminent of God's servants frequently magnifying their office as preachers of the gospel. Wh. field was wont to call his pulpit his throne ; and when he stood upon some rising knoll to preach to the thousands gathered in the open air, he was more happy than if he had assumed the imperial purple, for he ruled the hearts of men more gloriously than doth a king. When Dr. Carey was laboring in India, and his son Felix had accepted the office of ambassador to the king of Burmah, Carey said, "Felix has drivelled into an ambassador"—as though he looked upon the highest earthly office as an utter degradation if for it the minister of the gospel forsook his lofty vocation. Paul blesses God that this great grace was given to him, that he might preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ; he looked upon it not as toil, but as a grace. Aspire to this office, young men whose souls are full of love to Jesus. Fired with sacred enthusiasm, covet earnestly the best gifts, and out of love to Jesus try whether you cannot in your measure tell to your fellow-men the story of the cross. Men of zeal and ability, if you love Jesus, make the ministry your aim ; train your minds to it ; exercise your soul towards it ; and may God the Holy Spirit call you to it, that you also may preach the Word of reconciliation to the dying thousands. The laborers still are few : may the Lord of the harvest thrust you into his work.

But while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes the deeper it sinks in the water. A plenitude of grace is a cure for pride. Those who are empty, and those especially who have little or nothing to do, may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried ; but those who are called to the stern work of ministering among the sons of men, will often mourn their weakness, and in the

sense of that weakness and unworthiness, they will go before God and confess that they are less than the least of all saints. I prescribe to any of you who seek humility, try hard work ; if you would know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God, attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. You will come back from the proclamation thankful that you were permitted to attempt it, but crying, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are.

Although our apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, there is one thing which never troubled him: he was never perplexed as to the subject of his ministry. I do not find the apostle in all his writings proposing to himself the question, "What shall I preach?" No, my brethren, he had been in the college of Christ, and had thoroughly learned his one subject, so that preferring it beyond all else, he said, with solemn decision, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." From his first sermon to his last, when he laid down his neck upon the block to seal his testimony with his blood, Paul preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. He lifted up the cross, and extolled the Son of God who bled thereon. His one and only calling here below was to cry, "Behold the Lamb! Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

I pause to ask, on my own account, the prayers of God's people yet again, that the Holy Spirit may be my helper this morning. Oh deny not my earnest request! I call the attention of you all to this great master subject, which engrossed all the powers and passions of such a one as Paul, and I shall beg you to notice first, *a glorious person mentioned*—the Lord Jesus Christ; secondly, *unsearchable riches spoken of*; and thirdly, which shall make our practical con-

clusion--*a royal intention implied*, the intention which Jesus had in his heart when he bade his servants preach his unsearchable riches.

I. First then, may the Spirit of God strengthen us in our weakness while we try to speak upon THIS GLORIOUS PERSON, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ was the first promise of God to the sons of men after the fall. When our first parents had been banished from the garden, all was dark before them. There was not a star to gild the cheerless midnight of their guilty and despairing souls until their God appeared to them, and said in mercy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That was the first star which God set in the sky of man's hope. Years rolled after years, and the faithful looked up to it with comfort; that one promise stayed the soul of many a faithful one, so that he died in hope, not having received the promise, but having seen it afar off, and having rejoiced in its beams. Whole centuries rolled away, but the seed of the woman did not come. Messiah, the great bruiser of the serpent's head, did not appear. Why tarried he? The world was foul with sin and full of woe. Where was the Shiloh who should bring it peace? Graves were digged by millions, hell was filled with lost spirits, but where was the promised One, mighty to save? He was waiting till the fulness of time should come; he had not forgotten, for he had God's will in his inmost bowels; his desire to save souls was consuming his heart; he was but waiting until the word should be given. And when it was given, lo! he came, delighting to do the Father's will. Seek ye him! Behold, in Bethlehem's manger Emmanuel is born, God is with us. Before your eyes he lies who was both the Son of Mary, and the Son of the blessed, an infant, and yet infinite, of a span long, and yet filling all eternity, wrapped in swaddling bands, and yet too great for space to hold him. Thirty and more

years he lived on earth : the latter part of his life was spent in a ministry full of suffering to himself, but fraught with good to others. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Never man spake like that man. He was a man on fire with love; a man without human imperfections, but with all human sympathies; a man without the sins of manhood, but with something more than the sorrows of common manhood piled upon him. There was never such a man as he, so great, so glorious in his life, and yet he is the pattern and type of manhood. He reached his greatest when he stooped the lowest. He was seized by his enemies one night when wrestling in prayer, betrayed by the man who had eaten bread with him; he was dragged before tribunal after tribunal, through that long and sorrowful night, and wrongfully accused of blasphemy and sedition. They scourged him; though none of his works deserved a blow, yet the ploughers made deep furrows on his back. They mocked him; though he merited the homage of all intelligent beings, yet they spat in his face, and smote him with their mailed fists, and said, "Prophecy, Who is he that smote thee?" He was made lower than a slave; even the abjects opened their mouths with laughter at him, and the slaves scoffed at him. To end the scene, they took him through the streets of the Jerusalem over which he had wept; they hounded him along the Via Dolorosa, out through the gate, to the mount of doom. Methinks I see him, as with eyes all red with weeping, he turns to the matrons of Salem, and cries, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children." Can you see him bearing that heavy cross, ready to faint beneath the burden? Can you endure to see him, when, having reached the little mound outside the city, they hurl him on his back, and drive the cruel iron through his hands and feet? Can you bear to see the spectacle of blood and anguish as they lift him up between heaven and earth, made a sacrifice for the sin of his people?

My words shall be few, for the vision is too sad for language to depict. He bleeds, he thirsts, he groans, he cries—at last he dies—a death whose unknown griefs are not to be imagined, and were they known would be beyond expression by human tongue.

Now, it was the history of the crucifixion which Paul delighted to preach—Christ crucified was his theme—this old, old story, which ye have heard from your childhood, the story of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. Ye all know that our Lord, after he had been taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, lingered there but a few short hours, and then on the third day rose again from the dead, the same, yet not the same—a man, but no more despised and rejected. He communed with his servants in a familiar and yet glorious manner for forty days, and cheered and comforted their hearts, and then, from the top of Olivet, in the sight of the company, he ascended to his Father's throne. Follow him with your hearts, if ye cannot with your eyes. Behold him as the angels meet him, and

“Bring his chariot from on high,
To bear him to his throne;
Clap their triumphant hands, and cry,
‘The glorious work is done.’”

There he sits—faith sees him this very day—at the right hand of God, even the Father, pleading with authority for his people; ruling heaven, and earth, and hell, for the keys thereof swing at his girdle; waiting till, on the flying cloud, he shall descend to judge the quick and dead, and distribute the vengeance or the reward. It was this glorious person of whom Paul delighted to speak. He preached the doctrines of the gospel, but he did not preach them apart from the person of Christ. Do not many preachers make a great mistake by preaching doctrine instead of preaching the Saviour? Certainly the doctrines are to be preached, but they ought to be looked upon as the robes and vestments of the man

Christ Jesus, and not as complete in themselves. I love justification by faith—I hope I shall never have a doubt about that grand truth ; but the cleansing efficacy of the precious blood appears to me to be the best way of putting it. I delight in sanctification by the Spirit ; but to be conformed to the image of Jesus, is a still sweeter and more forcible way of viewing it. The doctrines of the gospel are a golden throne upon which Jesus sits, as king—not a hard, cold stone rolled at the door of the sepulchre in which Christ is hidden. Brethren, I believe this to be the mark of God's true minister, that he preaches Christ as his one choice and delightful theme. In the old romance, they tell us that at the gate of a certain noble hall there hung a horn, and none could blow that horn but the true heir to the castle and its wide domains. Many tried it. They could make sweet music on other instruments ; they could wake the echoes by other bugles ; but that horn was mute, let them blow as they might. At last, the true heir came, and when he set his lips to the horn, shrill was the sound and indisputable his claim. He who can preach Christ is the true minister. Let him preach any thing else in the world, he has not proved his calling ; but if he shall preach Jesus and the resurrection, he is in the apostolical succession. If Christ crucified be the great delight of his soul, the very marrow of his teaching, the fatness of his ministry, he has proved his calling as an ambassador of Christ. Brethren, the Christian minister should be like these golden spring flowers which we are so glad to see. Have you observed them when the sun is shining ? How they open their golden cups, and each one whispers to the great sun, " Fill me with thy beams ! " but when the sun is hidden behind a cloud, where are they ? They close their cups and droop their heads. So should the Christian feel the sweet influences of Jesus ; so especially should the Christian minister be subject to his Lord. Jesus must be his sun, and he must be the flower which yields itself to the Sun of Righteousness.

Happy would it be for us if our hearts and our lips could become like Anacreon's harp, which was wedded to one subject, and would learn no other. He wished to sing of the sons of Atreus, and the mighty deeds of Hercules, but his harp resounded love alone; and when he would have sung of Cadmus, his harp refused—it would sing of love alone. Oh! to speak of Christ alone—to be tied and bound to this one theme forever; to speak alone of Jesus, and of the amazing love of the glorious Son of God, “who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.” This is the subject which is both “seed for the sower, and bread for the eater.” This is the live coal for the lip of the preacher, and the master-key to the heart of the hearer. This is the tune for the minstrels of earth, and the song for the harpers of heaven. Lord, teach it to us more and more, and we will tell it out to others.

Before I leave this subject, I feel bound to make two or three remarks. You will perceive that the apostle Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, not the dignity of manhood, or the grandeur of human nature; he preached not man, but man's Redeemer. Let us do the same. Moreover, he did not preach up the clergy and the church, but Christ alone. Some of the gentlemen who claim to be in the apostolical succession, could hardly have the effrontery to claim to be the successors of Paul. I believe that our modern priests are in the apostolical succession. I have never doubted that they are the lineal successors of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed his Master; but no other apostle would endure them for so much as an hour. Look ye, if Paul had been their leader, would he not have preached the unsearchable riches of priestcraft, as they do? Do not they preach up their own priestly power? Did Paul do this? Is not their one great theme the unsearchable riches of baptism; the unsearchable riches of the Eucharist, the blessed bread and the blessed wine; the unsearchable riches of their confession and absolution; the unsearchable riches of their albs

and their dalmatics, and their chasubles, and I know not what else of the rags of the whore of Babylon? A fine day is this in which we are to go back to the superstitions of the dark ages—so dark that our forefathers could not bear them—and for the unsearchable cunning of priests are to give up the unsearchable riches of Christ! We are told that the Reformation was a mistake; but we tell these false priests to their faces that they lie, and know not the truth. Beloved, Paul cared nothing for priestcraft; and this Book has not a word in it in favor of priestcraft. With Paul and with this Book all believers in Jesus are priests, and God's only clergy. Paul never posted bills upon the walls of Jerusalem, with black crosses on them, warning men that they would not be able to meet Christ at the Day of Judgment, if they did not keep Good Friday; but I will tell you what Paul did, he wrote to the Galatians, "Ye observe days, months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." This whole abomination of ritualism was the utter abhorrence of the apostle: in its first form of Judaism it stirred up his whole soul with indignation; it brought the blood into his cheek, he never was mightier in denouncing any thing than when dealing heavy blows at ceremonialism; he said, "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love." Paul preached up no priest, whether he lived at Rome or Canterbury; he exalted no class of men arrogantly pretending to have power to save. He would have been out of all patience with a set of simpletons decked out as Guys, and dressed up as if they were meant to amuse children in a nursery. He never taught the worship of these calves, but Jesus alone was his subject, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. Mark you, on the other hand, Paul did not preach up the unsearchable riches of philosophy, as some do. "Yes," say some, "we must please this thinking age, this thoughtful people; we must educate a people who will reject all testimony because they

will not be credulous ; who will believe nothing but what they can understand, because, forsooth, their understanding is so amazingly clear, so perfect, so all but divine ! ” Not so, the apostle : he would have said to these philosophical gentlemen, “ Stand away ; I have nothing at all that can make me kindred with you, I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, not the uncertainties of philosophical speculation ; I give the people something to believe, something tangible to lay hold of, not superstitious, it is true, but divinely accredited ; not concocted by the wisdom of man, but revealed by the wisdom of God.” My dear friends, we must come back to the gospel of Paul, and may God bring all his ministering servants more and more clearly back to it, that we may have nothing to preach but that which clusters around the cross ; which glows and glistens like a sacred halo of light around the head of the Crucified One ; that we may lift up nothing but Jesus, and say, “ God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. Secondly, Paul preached THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Paul had no stinted Saviour to present to a few, no narrow-hearted Christ to be the head of a clique, no weak Redeemer who could pardon only those little offenders who scarcely needed it, but he preached a great Saviour to the great masses, a great Saviour to great sinners ; he preached the Conqueror with dyed garments, travelling in the greatness of his strength, whose name is “ mighty to save.” Let us inquire in what respects we may ascribe to our Lord Jesus the possession of unsearchable riches ? Our answer is first, he has *unsearchable riches of love to sinners as they are*. Jesus so loved the souls of men that we can only use the “ so,” but we cannot find the word to match with it. In the French Revolution, there was a young man condemned to the guillotine, and shut up in one of the prisons. He was greatly loved by many, but there was one who loved him

more than all put together. How know we this? It was his own father; and the love he bore his son was proved in this way: when the lists were called, the father, whose name was exactly the same as his son's, answered to the name, and the father rode in the gloomy tumbril out to the place of execution, and his head rolled beneath the axe instead of his son's, a victim to mighty love. See here an image of the love of Christ to sinners; for thus Jesus died for the ungodly, viewed as such. If they had not been ungodly, neither they nor he had needed to have died; if they had not sinned, there would have been no need for a suffering Saviour, but Jesus proved his boundless love "in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Your name was in the condemned list, my fellow-sinner, but, if you believe in Jesus, you shall find that your name is there no longer, for Christ's name is put in your stead, and you shall learn that he suffered for you, the just for the unjust, that he might bring you to God. Is not this the greatest wonder of divine love, that it should be set upon us *as sinners*? I can understand God's loving reformed sinners, and repenting sinners; but here is the glory of it, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners—*yet sinners!*—Christ died for us." O my hearers, from my inmost heart I pray that this boundless wealth of love on the part of Jesus to those who were rebels and enemies, may win your hearts to love the heavenly Lover in return.

In the next place, Jesus has *riches of pardon for those who repent of their sins*. My Lord Jesus, by his death, has become immensely rich in pardoning power—so rich indeed that no guiltiness can possibly transcend the efficacy of his precious blood. There is one sin which he never will forgive—there is but one—and I am convinced that you have not committed that sin against the Holy Ghost if you have any feeling of repentance or desire towards God; for the sin which is unto death, brings death with it to the conscience, so that when once committed, the man ceases to feel. If thou

desirest pardon, sinner, there is no reason why thou shouldst not have it, and have it now. The blood of Christ can wash out blasphemy, adultery, fornication, lying, slander, perjury, theft, murder. Though thou hast raked in the very kennels of hell till thou hast blackened thyself to the color of a devil, yet, if thou wilt come to Christ and ask mercy, he will absolve thee from all sin. Do but wash in the bath which he has filled with blood, and "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do not misunderstand me, I mean just this, that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not meant exclusively for you respectable people, who always appear to be so religious, but for you who are irreligious, for you who are not even moral, or sober, or honest. I tell you the gospel of Christ is meant for the scum of the population; it is meant for the lowest of the low, for the worst of the worst. There is no den in London where the Saviour cannot work; there is no loathsome haunt of sin too foul for him to cleanse. The heathen fabled of their Hercules that he cleansed the Augean stables by turning a river through them, and so washing away the filth of ages; if your heart be such a stable, Christ is greater than the mightiest Hercules—he can cause the river of his cleansing blood to flow right through your heart, and your iniquities, though they are a heap of abominations, shall be put away forever. Riches of love to sinners as such, and riches of pardon to sinners who repent, are stored up in the Lord Jesus.

Again, *Christ has riches of comfort for all that mourn.* Have I the happiness of having before me some who mourn before the Lord? Blessed are you, for you shall be filled. What is the cause of your weeping? Is it your sin? Christ has a handkerchief that can wipe away such tears. He can blot out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Do but come to him, and your deepest sorrow shall disappear beneath the influence of his sympathetic love. Are you sorrowful because you have lost a friend?

He will be a friend to you. Have you been deceived and betrayed? My Master can meet that craving of your nature after friendship and sympathy. Confide in him and he will never forsake you. Oh! I cannot tell you how rich he is in consolation, but the Holy Ghost can tell you. If you do but get Jesus, you shall find, as Bernard used to say, that he is "honey to the mouth, music to the ear, and heaven to the heart." Win Christ, and you shall want nothing beyond him: lay hold of him, and you shall say with the apostle, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

My Master's unsearchable riches are also of another kind. Do you thirst for knowledge? *Jesus has riches of wisdom.* The desire to know has sent men roving over all the world, but he who finds Jesus may stay at home and be wise. If you sit at his feet, you shall know what Plato could not teach you, and what Socrates never learned. When the old schoolmen could not answer and defend a proposition, they were wont to say, "I will go to Aristotle: he shall help me out." If you do but learn of Christ, he shall help you out of all difficulties; and that which is most useful for your soul to know, the knowledge which will last you in eternity, Christ shall teach to you. Think not that the gospel of Christ, because it is simple, is therefore mere child's play. Oh, no! it has that in it which an angel's intellect unillumined of the Holy Spirit might fail to master, the highest ranks of seraphim still lost in wonder gaze upon it. Come to my master, and you shall be made wise unto salvation.

Let me not weary you with so great a message. Perhaps I tell it badly, but the matter of it is worthy of your ears, and worthy of your hearts. *My master has riches of happiness to bestow upon you.* After all, he is the rich man who wears heart's-ease in his button-hole. The man who can say, "I have enough," is richer than the peer of the

realm who is discontented. Believe me, my Lord can make you to lie down in green pastures, and lead you beside still waters. There is no music like the music of his pipe, when he is the Shepherd and you are the sheep, and you lie down at his feet. There is no love like his, neither earth nor heaven can match it. If you did but know it, you would prize it beyond all mortal joys, and say with our poet—

“Such as find thee find such sweetness,
Deep, mysterious, and unknown;
Far above all worldly pleasures,
If they were to meet in one.
My Belovèd,
O’er the mountains haste away.”

I speak experimentally. I have had more joy in half an hour’s communion with Christ than I have found in months of other comforts. I have had much to make me happy—divers successes and smiles of providence which have cheered and comforted my heart; but they are all froth on the cup, mere bubbles—the foam of life, and not its true depths of bliss. To know Christ and to be found in him—oh! this is life, this is joy, this is marrow and fatness, wine on the lees well refined! My Master does not treat his servants churlishly: he gives to them as a king giveth to a king; he gives them two heavens—a heaven below in serving him here, and a heaven above in delighting in him forever.

And now I shall close this poor talk of mine about these priceless riches, by saying that *the unsearchable riches of Christ will be best known in eternity*. The riches of Christ are not so much to be enjoyed here as *there*. He will give you by the road and on the way to heaven all your needs; your place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure; but it is there, *there*, THERE, where you shall hear the song of them that triumph, the shout of them that feast. My dear hearer, if you get Christ, you have obtained riches which

you can take with you in the hour of death. The rich man clutched his bags of money, and as he laid them on his heart, he murmured, "They will not do ; they will not do ; take them away !" If you receive Jesus into your heart, he will be death's best antidote. When your disembodied spirit quits this poor clay carcass, as it must, what will your silver and gold do for you then ? What will your farms and your broad acres do for you then ? You must leave them all behind. Even if men buy you a coffin of gold, or bury you in a sarcophagus of marble, yet of what avail will that be ? But oh ! if you have Christ, you can fly up to heaven to your treasure, and there you shall be rich to all the intents of bliss, world without end.

Now, dear friends, if I could have spoken as Paul would have spoken, I would have done so, but the subject would have been the same. Paul preached the gospel better than I do, but even he could not preach a better gospel. Let me close this point by a few words. My Master has such riches that you cannot count them ; you cannot guess them, much less can you convey their fulness in words. They are *unsearchable* ! You may look, and search, and weigh, but Christ is a greater Christ than you think him to be when your thoughts are at the greatest. My Master is more able to pardon than you to sin, more able to forgive than you to transgress. My Master is more ready to supply than you are to ask, and ten thousand times more prepared to save than you are to be saved. Never tolerate low thoughts of my Lord Jesus. Your highest estimates will dishonor him ; when you put the crown on his head, you will only crown him with silver when he deserves gold ; when you sing the best of your songs, you will only give him poor, discordant music, compared with what he deserves, but oh ! do believe in him, that he is a great Christ, a mighty Saviour. Great sinner, come and do him honor by trusting in him as a great Saviour. Come with your great sins, and your great cares, and your great wants !

Come, and welcome. Come to him now, and the Lord will accept you, and accept you without upbraiding you.

III. Lastly, there must have been A ROYAL INTENTION in the heart of Christ in sending out Paul to preach of his unsearchable riches, because every man must have a motive for what he does, and beyond all question, Jesus Christ has a motive.

Did you ever hear of a man who employed a number of persons to go about to proclaim his riches, and call hundreds of people together, and thousands, as on this occasion, simply to tell them that So-and-so was very rich? Why, the crowds would say, "What is that to us?" But if at the conclusion, the messenger could say, "But all these riches he presents to you, and whoever among you shall desire to be made rich, can be enriched now by him." Ah! then you would say, "Now we see the sense of it. Now we perceive the gracious drift of it all." Now, my Lord Jesus Christ is very strong, but all that strength is pledged to help a poor weak sinner to enter into heaven. My Lord Christ is a great king, and he reigns with irresistible power; but all that sovereign power he swears to give to believers to help them to reign over their sins. My Lord Jesus is as full of merit as the sea is full of salt, but every atom of that merit he vows to give to sinners who will confess that they have no merits of their own, and will trust in him. Ay, and once more, my Lord Christ is so glorious that the very angels are not bright in his presence, for he is the Sun, and they are but as twinkling stars; but all this glory he will give to you, poor sinner, and make you to be glorious in his glory, if you will but trust him. There is a motive, then, on our Lord's part for bidding us preach a full Christ.

I think I hear a whisper somewhere; there is a poor heart standing crowded in the aisle, and it is saying to itself, "Ah! I am full of sin; I am weak; I am lost; I have no merit." My dear hearer, thou dost not need any

merit, nor any strength, nor any goodness in thyself, for Jesus presents thee with an abundance of all these in himself. I will not care whether I have money in my own purse or not, if I have a kind friend who says, "All that I have is thine;" if I may go and draw upon him whenever I please for whatever I wish, I will not desire to be independent of him, but I will live upon his fulness. Poor sinner, you must do the same. You do not need merits or strength apart from Christ: take my Master, and he will be enough for you, while you shall joyfully sing, "Christ is my all."

Two or three words, then. The first is this: *How rich those must be who have Christ for a friend!* Will you not seek to be friends with him? If it be true that all Christ has he gives to his people—and this is asserted over and over again in this Book—then, oh! how unspeakably blest must those be who can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his!" They who get Christ to be their own property, are like the man who, having long eaten of fruit from a certain tree, was no longer satisfied with having the fruit, but he must needs take up the tree and plant it in his own garden. Happy those who have Christ planted as the tree of life in the soil of their hearts! You not only have his grace, and his love, and his merit, but you have HIMSELF. He is all your own. Oh, that sweet word, Jesus is mine! Jesus is mine! All that there is in his humanity, in his deity, in his living and in his dying, in his reigning and in his second advent, all is mine, for Christ is mine.

How transcendently foolish, on the other hand, must those be who will not have Christ when he is to be had for the asking! who prefer the baubles and the bubbles of this world, and let the solid gold of eternity go by! O fools, to play with shadows and miss the substance! to dig and toil, and cover your faces with sweat, and lose your nightly rest, to get this world's fleeting good, while you neglect him who is the eternal good! O fools and slow of heart, to

court this harlot world, with her painted face, when the beauties of my Master are infinitely more rich and rare ! Oh ! if you did but know him, if you could but see his unspeakable riches, you would fling your toys to the wind, and follow after him with all your heart and soul.

“ But may I have him ? ” says one. May you, indeed ! Who is to say you nay ? Did not you hear the sweet notes of the hymn just now, “ Come and welcome, come and welcome ” ? When heaven’s big bell rings, it always sounds forth that silver note for sinners—“ Come and welcome ! Come and welcome ! ” Leave your sins, leave your follies, leave your self-righteousness. Jesus Christ stands at the open door of grace, more willing to receive you than you are to be received by him. “ Come and welcome, come and welcome.” At the top of the Hospice of St. Bernard, in the storm, when the snow is falling fast, the monks ring the great bell, and when the way cannot be seen, the traveller can almost hear the way to the house of refuge across the snowy waste. So would I ring that bell this morning. Poor lost traveller, with thy sins and thy fears blowing cold into thy face, “ Come and welcome, come and welcome,” to a Saviour once dead and buried for thee, but now risen and pleading at the right hand of God. If thou canst not see thy way, yet hear it. “ Hear, and your soul shall live ; and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

You need nothing but Christ, dear heart ; you need pump up no tears of repentance to help Christ, for he will give you repentance if you seek it of him. You must come to him to get repentance ; you must not seek that gospel blessing anywhere but at the cross. You will need no baptisms and Lord’s Suppers to rely upon ; it will be your duty as a believer to profess your faith in him, and to remember him at his table, but these things will not help your salvation, you will be saved by Jesus and by him alone. You need experience no terrors, you need undergo no prepara-

tion, Christ is ready to receive you *now*. Like the surgeon whose door is open for every accident that may occur; like the great hospitals on our side the river, where, let the case be what it may, the door swings open the moment an entrance is demanded—such is my Master. Unsearchable riches are in him, though unsearchable poverty may be in you.

“Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream,
All the *fitness* he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you;
’Tis his Spirit’s rising beam.”

All this week long I have been fretting and worrying because I cannot preach to you as I wish, and when each of my sermons here has been over, I have wished that I could preach it again in a more earnest and fervent manner. But what can I do? O my hearers, I can preach Christ to you, but I cannot preach you to Christ. I can tell you that if you trust in him you shall be saved; I can declare to you that as the Son of God now risen he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to him, but I cannot make you come. Yet, I thank God, since last Sunday I have heard of some who have come; I have heard good news of some who, by the Holy Ghost’s power, have believed in Jesus. Are there no more eyes that will look at my Master’s wounds? Are there no more hearts that will fall in love with my Master’s beauties? Must I come a wooing for him, and get so small a return? Must it be ones and twos out of the twenty thousands of you? God forbid it! God send us a greater rate of fruit than this, a hundredfold harvest to a hundredfold congregation. Pray, believers, pray for a blessing. Pray that God may strike this lip dumb before next Sunday if he will do more good by some other preacher than by me. Ask nothing for me, but ask large things for my Lord, for the Crucified One. Do pray

that these great gatherings may not be without a permanent result which shall tell upon the impiety of this city; ay, and tell upon the piety of it too, slaying the first, and stimulating the second. God send forth the Spirit of his grace, and unto him shall be the praise, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XVI

THE END OF THE RIGHTEOUS DESIRED.

"LET ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AND LET MY LAST END BE LIKE HIS!"—Numbers xxiii. 10.

CARLYLE, in his "History of the French Revolution," tells us of a Duke of Orleans who did not believe in death; so that when his secretary stumbled on the words, "The late King of Spain," he angrily demanded what he meant by it. The obsequious attendant replied, "My Lord, it is a title which some of the kings of Spain have taken." In all this assembly I have not such a lunatic; for you unanimously believe that the entire race of men await alike the inevitable hour. We know that all our paths, wind as they may, will lead to the grave. A certain king of France believed in death, but forbade that it should ever be mentioned in his presence. "And if," said he, "I at any time look pale, no courtier must dare, on pain of my displeasure, to mention it in my presence;" thus imitating the foolish ostrich, which, when pursued by the hunter, and utterly unable to escape, is said to hide its head in the sand, fancying that it is secure from the enemy which it cannot see. I trust I do not address to-day any men so idiotic as to desire to forget the certainty of death, or to thrust the fact from their remembrance. I trust that, being sane men, you desire to look in the face of the whole of your future history, both in the present world and in worlds beyond the region of sight; and, foreseeing that soul and body must part in the article of death, you are desirous to consider that event, that you

may be prepared for it. You desire to take death into your reckoning that it may not surprise you unawares. He who should go upon a long journey, and provide for every difficulty on the road but one, would probably find the journey a failure. If, with a rolling chariot for the solid ways, he had forgotten to find the means of crossing the last river which would divide him from the country which he sought, he would be disappointed after all his pains. If you have provided for life, but have not also prepared for death, what better will you be, my hearer, than such a foolish traveller? We have heard of one, who, going into a tavern, ordered according to his wildest wishes, and feasted sumptuously on the best the house afforded, hour after hour; but when the host came with the bill, he told him that he had no money, and had quite forgotten the reckoning, thinking it quite enough to attend to the eating and drinking while these were the order of the day, without perplexing himself about the unknown future. Alas! my hearer, are *you* living in this inn of life, forgetting the reckoning? Do you go from cup to cup, from merriment to merriment, feasting as though there were no day of account appointed for you? If so, are you fool or knave, or both? For a man who would enjoy life, and yet shirk the account of his responsibilities with which the scene must close, is either foolish, or knavish, or both. Surely, since we must die, since "there is no discharge in this war," since every man must be a conscript to the army of death, since, whether it be to-morrow or the next day, or in a few years' time, every one of us must pass through the iron gate, it behoves us, knowing the fact, to take it into our account, to be diligent in forestalling its demands, and providing for its emergencies. And yet I should not wonder if many here almost shudder at the subject which I am now introducing, so unaccustomed are they to it; or, if they listen to it, they consider it to be specially applicable to those by whom they are surrounded, but they fail to see its application to themselves. Young's verse is true—"All men think

all men mortal but themselves." They regard others as having death written upon their brow, but they imagine that they at least shall last for years to come. They will not dare to *say* that they are immortal, yet alas! they act as if they thought they were so; and trifling away year after year, suffer life itself to disappear without improvement. I conjure all honest and wise hearts at this hour to reflect upon their latter end. Prepare now that you may be ready when the final summons shall be sounded, and may God grant you grace that the words of this morning may be made helpful to your preparations.

Balaam, though a base man, was no fool. He had thoughts of death. He did not shut his eyes to what he did not like. He believed that he should die, and he had desires about it; and though those desires were never realized, but the reverse, yet he had wit enough to gaze upon the tents of God's chosen Israel, and to say from his heart, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

I shall regard this exclamation as having in it *a double wish*: first, a *wish concerning death*, and secondly, a *wish concerning the after death*. When these have been spoken upon as the Holy Spirit may help me, I shall try to make *some practical use of the whole*.

I. First, dear friends, Balaam's WISH CONCERNING DEATH.

He anxiously desired that he might die such a death as the righteous die. Truly we commend his choice, for, in the first place, *it must, at the least, be as well with the righteous man when he comes to die, as with any other man*. By the righteous man we mean the man who has believed in Jesus, and so has been covered with Christ's righteousness, and washed in his most precious blood, and moreover has by the power of the Holy Spirit received a new heart, a righteous heart, so that his actions are righteous both towards God and man. Such a man being righteous by faith

in Jesus Christ unto perfect justification and righteous also in act and spirit through sanctification of the Holy Ghost, is alone the truly righteous man. Such a man *must be* right at last, and this you will see clearly by the following story. A certain carping infidel, after having argued with a poor countryman who knew the faith, but who knew little else, said to him, "Well, Hodge, you really are so stupid that there is no use of arguing with you, I cannot get you out of this absurd religion of yours." "Ah! well," said Hodge, "I dare say I am stupid, master, but do you know we poor people like to have two strings to our bow?" "Well," said the critic, "what do you mean by that?" "Master, I'll show you. Suppose it should all turn out as you say; suppose there is no God, and there is no hereafter, don't you see I am as well off as you are? Certainly, it will not be any worse for me than it will be for you, if we both of us get annihilated. But don't you see if it should happen to be true as I believe, what will become of you?" Clearly in either case it must be right with the righteous; for if he should have ignorantly received a cunningly devised fable, yet, seeing according to his own experience, it makes him a better and a happier man, so far so good—he is no loser here; and he will be certainly at the last in no worse a position than the man who rejected the holy and comfortable influences of what he styled a deception. While, if the religion of Jesus should be true—ah! ghastly ~~if~~ for you who doubt it?—if it should all be true, ah! then your weeping and your wailing at the discovery will be a terrible contrast to the joy and the glory which God has reserved for them that love him. Upon the very lowest possible ground it will be well with the righteous, as well at any rate as with the best of other men.

There is this to be said for the righteous man: he goes to the death chamber *with a quiet conscience*. It has been clearly ascertained that in the event of death, the mind is frequently quickened to a high degree of activity, so that it

thinks more perhaps in the course of five minutes than it could have done in the course of years at other times. Persons who have been rescued from drowning, have said that they imagined themselves to have been weeks in the water, for the thoughts, the many views and visions, the long and detailed retrospect seemed to them to have required weeks, and yet the whole transpired in a few seconds. Frequently towards the last, the soul travels at express speed, traversing its past life as though it rode upon the lightning. Ah ! then how blessed is that man who, looking back upon the past, can see many things of which conscience can approve ! and how accursed must that man's death-bed be who has to look back upon a youth spent in folly, a middle life of sin, and an old age of iniquity ! What will it be, my hearer, if, when you lie dying, there should rise up before your memory those whom you led into sin, seduced to vice, or taught in profligacy ! A grim assemblage must gather around some men's beds, when guilt, like a grim chamberlain, shall usher them in one by one, and call out their names with horrible distinctness, and tell out their doings and dealings with the wretch who shivers on the brink of death accused by so many, and unable to answer one of a thousand. I picture such a man travelling over the wastes of remorse, hounded by the wolves of his past sins, rushing with desperation into a destruction still worse than his present woe, all unable to endure the horrible baying of his old sins, much less to endure their sharper fangs when they shall tear him in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. But the righteous man knows that though his sins were as scarlet, they have been made white as wool through the precious blood of Christ ; and moreover, by the power of the Holy Spirit, his life has been kept from the vices of the world, and he has been enabled to serve his Lord ; this surely must help to make soft his dying pillow. He remembers those holy days of sacred worship, those gatherings around the family altar, that child taught to pray, that

young man won from folly and led in the paths of righteousness ; above all, he remembers the love visits which the Lord Jesus has paid to his favored soul ; and so, perfectly at peace, forgiving all men their offences as he desires to be forgiven, and conscious that his Father has forgiven him, he can sleep upon his dying bed as softly as on the stillest night of his life. "Let me," in this sense, "die the death of the righteous."

Again, the righteous man, when he dies, *does not lose his all*. With every other man the sound of "earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," is the end of present seeming wealth and the beginning of eternal and real want. But the Christian is not made a bankrupt by the grave : death to him is gain. "Go," said the dying Saracen hero, Saladin, "take this winding sheet, and as soon as I expire, bear it on a lance through all the streets, and let the herald cry as he holds aloft the ensign of death, 'This is all that is left of Saladin, the conqueror of the East.' " He need not have so said if he had been a Christian, for the believer's heritage is not rent from him, but opened up to him by the rough hand of death. The world to come and all its infinite riches and blessedness are ours in the moment of departure. It is written upon the tomb of Cyrus, "Stranger, here lies Cyrus, who gave the empire to the Persians ; grudge him not the little earth that covers him." But the Christian lies not there under the tombstone ; he is not here, for he is risen. He has left his poor worn garments here to be washed, and cleansed, and purified ; and by-and-by, when they are whiter than any fuller can make them, he will come to take his garments again ; but meanwhile the Christian is not buried here, nor is the tomb his sole possession ; his treasure is in heaven, and he is gone where his wealth is stored. Who would not wish to die a death which would be a gain to him ? Are you not conscious some of you that death would be a horrible loss to you ? It would shut up forever all the outlets of your present mirth, and all the sources of

your present joy. Alas for you ! for the day of the Lord to you will be darkness and not light !

“Let me die the death of the righteous” may well be our wish, because *he dies with a good hope*. Peering into eternity, with eyes marvellously strengthened, the believer frequently beholds even while he is yet below, something of the glory which is to be revealed in him. Have you never heard the songs of dying women, and seen their glowing countenances as they thought they could hear the angels, and all but see the invisible glory ? Have you never seen their beaming eyes and heard their memorable words, so rich, so original, so quaint, so wet with the dew of heaven, that they could not have borrowed them ? Ignorant, unlettered persons have I heard say in their dying moments, words which were worthy of the most refined poetry. Have you never seen the gray-headed man who, in his weakness, had come to talk as a child, suddenly clothed with patriarchal dignity, as, stretching out his bony hand, he has exclaimed, “Yea, though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” ? It is sweet to die with Canaan’s happy land in view—to melt into eternal bliss, as the twilight of the morning melts into opening day. It must be a dreary thing to die believing in annihilation, or expecting a doom still worse. My hearer, will this be your death ? Will you hear the warning cry of the angel : “One woe is past ; and, behold, there come two woes more” ? Death is past, but the judgment and the pit are yet to come. God forbid that such horrors should freeze the genial current of my soul, but may bliss eternal be my prospect from the top of my expiring Pisgah. Let me die as the Christian whose eye is resplendent with visions of light, and whose heart is fired with the confidence of seeing his Redeemer and being made like to him, to dwell with him world without end !

Moreover, beloved, *the believer dies in the arms of a*

Friend. I do not say in the arms of a mortal friend, for it has fallen to the lot of some Christians to be burnt at the stake; and some of them have rotted to death in dungeons; but yet I will repeat it, every believer dies in the arms of a Friend; the best of friends, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Precious is communion with the Son of God, and never more so than when it is enjoyed upon the verge of heaven.

“Jesus can make a dying bed
 Feel soft as downy pillows are,
 While on his breast I lean my head,
 And breathe my life out sweetly there

Jesus is a friend who is most practically friendly, for the righteous man, in the most calm and business-like manner, leaves his wife and his children in the hands of God, and quotes the promise, “Leave thy fatherless children, and let thy widows trust in me.” He would fain live perhaps to comfort the partner of his bosom a little longer, and to see the children of their mutual love brought up to riper manhood, but since he must go, how often does God enable him to forget all care, to cast it so completely into the hands of Christ, that he sings, “All is well!” I have sometimes heard from dying saints sentences like these, “My business is all settled, I never want to hear again of the stock, of the farm, or of the shop, or of the family, I have put it all away; God will provide for those I have left behind, and I have nothing now to do but just to hear the summons, ‘Come up higher,’ and then to enter into my Father’s house.” My hearers, I am not giving you an exaggerated picture; I am not telling you some wondrous stories of remarkable departures, but I am telling you what is the common way of the dying of the righteous, which I trust commends itself to your conscience as being naturally that which righteous men might expect to feel when returning to their God. *The Christian dies in peace, and often in triumph.*

According to the state of his body, or the disease by which he may be taken off, his feelings will vary between peace and triumph. Sometimes the death scene is still as a summer's evening, and the Christian crosses the Jordan almost dryshod; or if there be a storm, and Jordan overflows its banks, the believer resting upon the everlasting arm, feels the bottom of the river and finds it good. At times however, God has been pleased to give to his people grace to mount to heaven in a chariot of fiery joy, so that their dying bed has been a throne, and their chamber a palace of glory. These instances are not uncommon, they are probably the rule; but in all cases there is a strong, deep current of pure and precious peace, which glides along the valley of deathshade, and makes glad the follower of the Lamb—"Let me die the death of the righteous," for such dying is the dawn of bliss, the antepast of immortal glory.

Lastly, when the good man dies, *he dies with honor*. Who cares for the death of the wicked? A few mourning friends lament for a little time, but they almost feel it a relief within a day or two that such a one is gone. As for the righteous, when he dieth there is weeping and mourning for him. Like Stephen, devout men carry him to the sepulchre, and make great lamentation over him. See you the funeral of the weeds? They are hurried up in heaps, they are thrown over the garden wall, they are burned forthwith, and no one regrets them; they were no blessing in living, they are no lamentation in dying. Did you ever see the funeral of the wheat, if such I may call it? Here come the golden sheaves. The wain is heavy with the precious freight: on the top stands one who gives a cheery note; and all around the harvest men and village maidens dance or shout for joy as they bring home the shocks of golden corn to the garner. Let me be gathered home with the triumphant funeral of the wheat which man values, garnered by angels, housed with songs of saintly spirits, and not cast away as a reprobate and worthless thing, like the weeds of

which men are thankful to be rid. May it be yours and mine, when we depart, to be remembered by those whom we have succored in their need, whom we instructed in their ignorance, whom we comforted in their distress ! May we not depart from this world shaken off from it, as Paul shook the viper from his hand, but may our ashes be gathered up as sacred dust, precious in the sight of the Lord. Let me, in that sense and every other, “die the death of the righteous.”

I need not tarry long on this point. Any one of these suggestions might suffice to incite, even in such a man as Balaam, a desire to “die the death of the righteous.” Surely it will kindle in you the same longings.

II. Balaam spoke concerning the godly man, of HIS LAST END.

I do not know that this wicked prophet, whose eyes were once opened, knew any thing about this latter end, as I shall interpret it ; but you and I do know, and so let us use his words, if not his thoughts. We do not believe that death is the last end of men. Those who do believe it are welcome to their belief. We certainly shall not wish to deprive them of it. When a dog has his bone, let him keep it ; we envy not his enjoyment. If ungodly men delight in the thought of dying like brutes, perhaps they know their own value best, and know what would be best for society if it should happen to them ; so they, having made their choice, shall keep it if they will. As for us, we believe ourselves to be immortal ; that God has endowed us with a spiritual nature which shall outlive the sun, outlast the stars, and run on coeval with eternity. Like the years of God’s right hand, like the days of the Most High, has God ordained the life of souls to be. Now, I can well believe that the most of us wish that our position after death may be like that of the righteous. The first consideration in death is that *the spirit is disembodied*. What a spirit is like without a body you

and I cannot guess : it is, of course, not a thing to be seen, or heard, or touched, or handled ; it is quite out of the realm of materialism, and quite beyond the reach of the senses. Yet you and I are conscious that there is an immaterial something within us infinitely more precious than these poor clay hands, and feet, and eyes of ours. This immaterial something will leave the body, and it will be naked ; not a thing to be desired, for even Paul says, “ Not that we would be unclothed ; ” he did not desire the disembodied state for its own sake, nor should we. Those disembodied saints who are now in heaven are happy, perfectly happy as to their souls, but they, as to their manhood, are not yet made perfect. “ They without us,” the apostle says “ cannot be made perfect ; ” until we all are gathered in, and the resurrection day comes, they are without bodies ; and are, as it were, but half men ; all the powers they have are full of happiness, but they are “ waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body,” which will be at the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what is there desirable in the state of the Christian when his spirit is disembodied ? I should desire to be like a Christian in the disembodied state, because *he will not be altogether in a new and strange world.* Some of you have never exercised your spirits at all about the spirit-world. You have talked with thousands of people in bodies, but you have never spoke with spiritual beings ; to you the realm of spirit is all unknown ; but let me tell you, Christians are in the daily habit of communing with the spirit-world, by which I mean that their souls converse with God ; their spirits are affected by the Holy Spirit ; they have fellowship with angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation. Now, when some of you enter into the spirit-world, you will say, “ I never was here before ; this is a foreign land to me.” I can conceive that you will call for some companion. “ Is there any one here with whom I have had dealings ? ” And there will be a voice heard, “ Yes, I have often

spoken to you, and you to me." "Who is that?" It is Satan or some evil spirit with whom alone out of all spirits you have ever had communion; he will be the only friend to meet you—and what a friend! Your grim companion, your fellow-sinner, and your fellow-prisoner forever! But a Christian in the disembodied state, if I may so imagine it, might cry, "Where are my friends? I have been here before? Where are those with whom aforetime I had fellowship." And a response will come from the ministering angels; there, above all, will be the blessed Spirit of God; there will be God himself, and the Spirit of the ever-living Christ, all these will make up sweet company for the believer. After the soul has left the body, we believe that *it at once appears before God, and receives, by anticipation, what will be its final sentence.* To the righteous soul there is no sleeping in the grave, no delay in purgatory before he enters into heaven. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," is the portion of all who trust in Jesus. Now, think, dear hearer, your disembodied spirit will have to appear before the fiery eyes of God, what then is your relation to God this morning? Why, some of you never think of him; some of you, I almost blush to say it, have cursed him to his face, and have even asked him to damn you. Ah! he *will* do it, except you repent! But how delightful must it be for a man to say, "I am going up to God; he is my Father; it is no more terror to me than for a child to go home from school; I am going to my God, with whom I am reconciled by the precious blood of Jesus; I have known my God, he is no stranger to me; I saw him in Christ and I trusted him; and all my life long I learned to see him in the works of nature; I could say of the mountains and the valleys, 'My Father made them all.' I never was so happy as when thoughts of God came flowing into my spirit. My spirit has dwelt with God when in the body; it is not afraid to fly up to God now that it has left the body behind it." Surely, in the prospect of such

a judgment, each man may say, "Let my last end be like his!"

After the judgment is pronounced, *the disembodied spirit dwells in heaven*. Some of you could not be happy if you were allowed to enter that heaven. If you could be admitted between those pearly gates which forever exclude pollution, sin, and shame, you could not be happy there. Shall I tell you why? It is a land of spirit, and you have neglected your spirit; some of you even deny that you have a spirit, and I do not wonder that you say so, because I do not suppose that you have ever exercised it; but let a man who has delighted to commune with the Holy Spirit enter into the spirit-world, and he will be in his element! Besides, the world to come is a holy world; the engagements of disembodied spirits are all pure and lovely. What will that man do who loved drunkenness, who indulged in unclean habits? He will be out of his element. If he could be in heaven, as Whitfield used to say, he would ask God to let him out, and would run into hell for shelter, for heaven would be a dreadful place to an ungodly man. There is a dream which is told (I tell it not for the dream, but for the moral of it) of a young woman who imagined that she was in heaven unconverted, and thought she saw upon the pavement of transparent gold multitudes of spirits dancing to the sweetest music. She stood still, unhappy, motionless, silent, and when the King said to her, "Why do you not partake in the joy?" she answered, "I cannot join in the dance, for I do not know the measure; I cannot join in the song, for I do not know the tune;" then said he in a voice of thunder, "What dost thou here?" And she thought herself cast out forever. Ah, dear hearer! heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. If you do not learn heaven's language on earth you cannot learn it in the world to come. If you are not holy you cannot be with holy saints. What a misery would it be for you to be always with those who are praising and serving God if you know

nothing of his love. If you have never praised him on earth, you will not readily take to it there. You would be strangers in a strange land. Ah! trouble not yourselves, that shall never be your portion. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," much less can he ever enter there.

After awhile our bodies will be raised again; the soul will re-enter the body; for Christ has not only bought the souls of his people, but their bodies too. Think of that tremendous day, when the trump shall be heard, shrill as a clarion, ringing through earth, and heaven, and hell, "Awake, ye dead! awake, ye dead! and come to judgment! come to judgment, come away!" Then up will start the bodies of the wicked. I know not in what shapes of dread they will arise, nor how they will appear. What forms of ghastriness they will put on; what horrors will wreath their brows, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when the righteous shall rise they will be glorious like the Lord Jesus; they shall have all the loveliness which heaven itself can give them. Their body here is but a shrivelled grain sown in the earth; their next body will be as much more glorious than that as the sweetest flower of spring is fairer than the shrivelled seed that was cast into the mould. It will be a glorious body, raised in honor, raised in power, raised no more to die. Oh, glorious hour! I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Would you not wish to rise in the image of Christ as the righteous will? Remember you must rise from the grave very much what you are when put into it. I think I see a perfect model of a city before me, containing all that is to be built. Here I see a temple of alabaster, and there a dunghill. The architect is bidden to produce on the largest scale, in the purest marble, that city as modelled before him. Rest assured that he will

produce the temple as a temple, only far more splendid, and the dunghill as a dunghill, only ten thousand times more loathsome. Now, which are you in that model? For this life is a model of the life to come, and it is written, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." Ah! my hearer, you may well wish to be holy here, that you may be holy *there*; to be pure here, that you may be pure there; to be godlike on earth, that you may be godlike in heaven. "Let my last end be like that of the righteous." Let me wave the palm of victory; let me wear the crown of triumph; let me be girt about with the fair white linen of immaculate perfection; let me cast my crown before Jehovah's feet; let me swell the everlasting song; let my voice make one in that eternal chorus, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Oh! how will I sing! how sweetly shall my voice be attuned to notes of gratitude! how will my heart dance with ecstasy before that throne! "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

III. As this is the last occasion of my preaching in this great hall, I shall venture to trespass a little longer; and on the third head I shall most earnestly ask your solemn attention for a few minutes longer. We have to make A PRACTICAL USE OF THE WHOLE.

Behold the vanity of mere desires. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, and yet was slain in battle fighting against those righteous men whom he envied. There is an old proverb which says, "Wishers and woulders make bad housekeepers;" and another which declares, "Wishing never filled a sack." I commend the pith of those proverbs to you now. Mere desiring to die the death of the righteous, though it may be natural, will be exceedingly unprofitable. I beseech you stop not there. Have you never heard the old classic story of those ancient Gauls who, having once drunk the sweet wines of Italy constantly, as they snacked

their lips, said one to another, "Where is Italy?" And when their leaders pointed to the gigantic Alps crowned with snow, they said, "Cannot we cross them?" Every time they tasted the wine the question was put, "Where is Italy? and cannot we reach it?" This was good, plain sense. So they put on their war-harness, and marched to old Rome to fight for the wines of Italy. So, my brother, every time you hear of heaven, I should like you with Gothic ardor to say, "Where is it? for I fain would go." And happy should I be if men here would put on the harness of the Christian, and say, "Through floods and flames for such a conquest, to drink of such wines well refined, we would fain go to the battle that we may win the victory." Oh, the folly of those who, knowing and desiring this, yet spend their strength for naught! The Roman Emperor fitted out a great expedition and sent it to conquer Britain. The valiant legionaries leaped ashore, and each man gathered a handful of shells and went back to his bark again—that was all. Some of you are equally foolish. You are fitted by God for great endeavors and lofty enterprises, and you are gathering shells: your gold and your silver, your houses and your lands—they are mere empty shells—and heaven and everlasting life you let go. Like Nero, you send to Alexandria for sand for your amusements, and send not for wheat for your starving souls. O fools and slow of heart, when shall God, who gave you souls, give those souls wisdom that you may seek after the true treasure, the real pearl, the heavenly riches? "Well," cries one, "how is heaven to be had?" It is to be had only by a personal seeking after it. I have read of one who, when drowning, saw the rainbow in the heavens. Picture him as he sinks; he looks up, and there if he sees the many-colored bow, he may think to himself, "There is God's covenant sign that the world shall never be drowned, and yet, here I am drowning in this river." So it is with you. There is the arch of God's promise over you, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever

believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," yet because you believe not in him, you will be drowned in your sins. "I would fain enlist then," says one, "in the army of Christ, and fight for heaven." Come on, then, I am Christ's enlisting officer to day. "What am I to give?" says one. Give! give nothing. "But I have many good works." These are not to be brought as a price for heaven. "I have my prayers, and my tears of repentance." These cannot avail meritoriously; if you want to be a Christian, you must come to Christ with an empty hand. You know how the recruiting sergeant makes a soldier: not by asking the man to give him something, but by getting him to take the Queen's shilling. Take Christ—that is God's enlisting money—and you are enlisted. Do not bring any thing, but take the water of life freely. If you will trust the Lord Jesus, and take him to be your salvation, you are then enlisted as a soldier of Jesus. Oh! may you have grace to do that! But recollect, all soldiers have to fight. One of the first things you will have to do, if you become a Christian, is to carry a cross. Ah! you do not like it. "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light;" take it upon you: and yet to carnal shoulders the cross is very galling, and nothing but grace can make it light. You will have to give up your sins; you will have to give up your empty pleasures; you will have henceforth to bear witness for Christ before a crooked and perverse generation. Do not think to be Christ's soldier, and yet not wear his livery. No, you must put on his regimentals; you must wear his crest—his crest is the cross; you must take his shield, the shield of faith; and his sword, which is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, and resting alone on him, depending alone upon his merit, you shall certainly win the victory.

My brethren, what a blessing it will be if you and I shall ever reach the land of triumph. You remember Bunyan's picture. He says he saw a brave palace, and as he looked up he could hear happy spirits singing on the top.

They walked in white, clad in royal robes; and as he heard them singing, he longed to be with them. Going up to the door, he noticed that it was beset with armed men, a great host, with pikes, and halberds, and swords, pushing back all who desired to come. Presently he saw a man of bold countenance, covered with armor, go up to a man who sat at a table with a writer's ink-horn; and he heard him say, "Set down my name, sir:" and as soon as the name was set down the man drew his sword, and began to hack and hew right and left, cutting himself a way right through the midst of his enemies. After being covered with sweat and blood and many wounds, he at length forced an entrance; and Bunyan says, "I did hear them sweetly sing at the top, 'Come in! come in! eternal glory thou shalt win.'" I am this morning the man with the writer's ink-horn. Is there any one here who will say, "Set my name down, sir?" I trust it will be so. I trust the Holy Spirit will win your hearts for Jesus, that you will rest in him alone; but the moment your name is down, remember then the battle begins; then, with your sword drawn, you must begin to contend with your besetting sins; you must have done with your old ways, and must fight against them. You will have to cut as never soldier did, for you will have to wound yourself: it will be your own arms and eyes that will have to be given up, your own sins that will have to be slain. But, oh, the victory will make amends for it all! It was but the other day that on this floor men wrestled for the mastery—a dangerous sport in which few of us would like to take a share—but I do not doubt that to those who gained the victory, the victory seemed an ample compensation. Certainly to Rome's old legionaries, when they rode through the streets, and all the people climbed to the very chimney tops to see them ride the streets of Rome, it was enough reward for all their hardships; but the triumphs of heaven, the shouts of angels, the songs of the redeemed, the hallelujahs, the bliss forever, the glory without end, oh! those will

be an abundant recompense to the humble followers of the Lamb. Be of good courage, my brethren. Follow the Captain of your salvation! Forward to the fight, to the victory, and to the crown! And may the Lord so bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

NUMBER ONE THOUSAND ; OR, "BREAD ENOUGH
AND TO SPARE."

[This was the thousandth sermon in the regular weekly series. The discourses have been published without a break from week to week.]

"AND WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, HE SAID, HOW MANY HIRED SERVANTS OF MY FATHER'S HAVE BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE, AND I PERISH WITH HUNGER?"
Luke xv. 17.

"He came to himself." The word may be applied to one waking out of a deep swoon. He had been unconscious of his true condition, and he had lost all power to deliver himself from it ; but now he was coming round again, returning to consciousness and action. The voice which shall awaken the dead aroused him ; the visions of his sinful trance all disappeared ; his foul but fascinating dreams were gone ; he came to himself. Or the word may be applied to one recovering from insanity. The prodigal son had played the madman, for sin is madness of the worst kind. He had been demented, he had put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness ; he had injured himself, and had done for his soul what those possessed of devils in our Saviour's time did for their bodies, when they wounded themselves with stones, and cut themselves with knives. The insane man does not know himself to be insane, but as soon as he comes to himself he painfully perceives the state from which he is escaping. Returning then to true reason and sound judgment, the prodigal came to himself. Another illustration of the word may be found in the old world fables of enchantment : when a man was disenthralled from the magician's spell he "came to himself." Classic story has its legend of Circe, the enchant-

ress, who transformed men into swine. Surely this young man in our parable had been degraded in the same manner. He had lowered his manhood to the level of the brutes. It should be the property of man to have love to his kindred, to have respect for right, to have some care for his own interest ; this young man had lost all these proper attributes of humanity, and so had become as the beast that perisheth. But as the poet sings of Ulysses, that he compelled the enchantress to restore his companions to their original form, so here we see the prodigal returning to manhood, looking away from his sensual pleasures, and commencing a course of conduct more consistent with his birth and parentage. There are men here to-day perhaps who are still in this swoon ; O God of heaven, arouse them ! Some here who are morally insane : the Lord recover them, the divine Physician put his cooling hand upon their fevered brow, and say to them : " I will ; be thou made whole." Perhaps there are others here who have allowed their animal nature to reign supreme ; may he who destroys the works of the devil deliver them from the power of Satan, and give them power to become the sons of God. He shall have all the glory !

It appears that when the prodigal came to himself he was shut up to two thoughts. Two facts were clear to him, that there was plenty in his father's house, and that he himself was famishing. May the two kindred spiritual facts have absolute power over all your hearts, if you are yet unsaved ; for they were most certainly all-important and pressing truths. These are no fancies of one in a dream ; no ravings of a maniac ; no imaginations of one under fascination : it is most true that there is plenty of all good things in the Father's house, and that the sinner needs them. Nowhere else can grace be found or pardon gained ; but with God there is plenitude of mercy ; let none venture to dispute this glorious truth. Equally true is it that the sinner without God is perishing. He is perishing now ; he will

perish everlastingly. All that is worth having in his existence will be utterly destroyed, and he himself shall only remain as a desolation; the owl and the bittern of misery and anguish shall haunt the ruins of his nature forever and forever. If we could shut up unconverted men to those two thoughts, what hopeful congregations we should have. Alas! they forget that there is mercy only with God, and fancy that it is to be found somewhere else; and they try to slip away from the humbling fact of their own lost estate, and imagine that perhaps there may be some back door of escape; that, after all, they are not so bad as the Scripture declares, or that perchance it shall be right with them at the last, however wrong it may be with them now. Alas! my brethren, what shall we do with those who wilfully shut their eyes to truths of which the evidence is overwhelming, and the importance overpowering? I earnestly entreat those of you who know how to approach the throne of God in faith, to breathe the prayer that he would now bring into captivity the unconverted heart, and put these two strong fetters upon every unregenerate soul; there is abundant grace with God, there is utter destitution with themselves. Bound with such fetters, and led into the presence of Jesus, the captive would soon receive the liberty of the children of God.

I intend only to dwell this morning, or mainly, upon the first thought, the master thought, as it seems to me, which was in the prodigal's mind—that which really constrained him to say, “I will arise and go to my father.” It was not, I think, the home-bringing thought that he was perishing with hunger, but the impulse towards his father found its mainspring in the consideration, “How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!” The plenty, the abundance, the superabundance of the father's house, was that which attracted him to return home; and many, many a soul has been led to seek God when it has fully believed that there was abundant mercy with him. My desire

this morning shall be to put plainly before every sinner here the exceeding abundance of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, hoping that the Lord will find out those who are his sons, and that they may catch at these words, and as they hear of the abundance of the bread in the Father's house, may say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

I. First, then, let us consider for a short time THE MORE THAN ABUNDANCE OF ALL GOOD THINGS IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE. What dost thou need this morning, awakened sinner? Of all that thou needest, there is with God an all-sufficient, a superabounding supply; "bread enough and to spare." Let us prove this to thee. First, *consider the Father himself*, and whosoever shall rightly consider the Father, will at once perceive that there can be no stint to mercy, no bound to the possibilities of grace. What is the nature and character of the Supreme? "Is he harsh or loving?" saith one. The Scripture answers the question, not by telling us that God is loving, but by assuring us that God is love. God himself is love; it is his very essence. It is not that love is in God, but that God himself is love. Can there be a more concise and more positive way of saying that the love of God is infinite? You cannot measure God himself; your conceptions cannot grasp the grandeur of his attributes, neither can you tell the dimensions of his love, nor conceive the fulness of it. Only this know, that high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts. His mercy endureth forever. He pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage. He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive: and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." "Thy mercy is great above the heavens." "The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."

If divine love alone should not seem sufficient for your

salvation, remember that with the Father to whom the sinner returns, there is as much of wisdom as there is of grace. Is thy case a very difficult one? He that made thee can heal thee. Are thy diseases strange and complex? He that fashioned the ear, can he not remove its deafness? He that made the eye, can he not enlighten it if it be blind? No mischief can have happened to thee, but what he who is thy God can recover thee from it. Matchless wisdom cannot fail to meet the intricacies of thy case.

Neither can there be any failure of power with the Father. Dost thou not know that he who made the earth, and stretched out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, hath no bound to his strength, nor limit to his might? If thou needest omnipotence to lift thee up from the slough into which thou hast fallen, omnipotence is ready to deliver thee, if thou cry to the strong for strength. Though thou shouldest need all the force with which the Creator made the worlds, and all the strength with which he bears up the pillars of the universe, all that strength and force should be laid out for thy good, if thou wouldst believingly seek mercy at the hand of God in Christ Jesus. None of his power shall be against thee, none of his wisdom shall plan thy overthrow; but love shall reign in all, and every attribute of God shall become subservient to thy salvation. Oh, when I think of sin I cannot understand how a sinner can be saved; but when I think of God, and look into his heart, I understand how readily he can forgive. "Look into his heart," saith one; "how can we do that?" Hath he not laid bare his heart to you? Do you inquire where he has done this? I answer, yonder, upon Calvary's cross. What was in the very centre of the divine heart? What, but the person of the Well-beloved, his only begotten Son? And he hath taken his only begotten and nailed him to the cross, because, if I may venture so to speak, he loved sinners better than his Son. He spared not his Son, but he spares the sinner; he poured out his wrath upon his Son and made him the sub-

stitute for sinners, that he might lavish love upon the guilty who deserved his anger. O soul, if thou art lost, it is not from any want of grace, or wisdom, or power in the Father ; if thou perish, it is not because God is hard to move or unable to save. If thou be a castaway, it is not because the Eternal refused to hear thy cries for pardon or rejected thy faith in him. On thine own head be thy blood, if thy soul be lost. If thou starve, thou starvest because thou wilt starve ; for in the Father's house there is "bread enough and to spare."

But, now, consider a second matter which may set this more clearly before us. Think of *the Son of God*, who is indeed the true bread of life for sinners. Sinner, I return to my personal address. Thou needest a Saviour ; and thou mayst well be encouraged when thou seest that a Saviour is provided—provided by God, since it is certain he would not make a mistake in the provision. But consider who the Saviour is. He is himself God. Jesus who came from heaven for our redemption was not an angel, else might we tremble to trust the weight of our sin upon him. He was not mere man, or he could but have suffered as a substitute for many, if indeed for one ; but he was very God of very God, in the beginning with the Father. And does such a one come to redeem ? Is there room to doubt as to his ability, if that be the fact ? I do confess this day, that if my sins were ten thousand times heavier than they are, yea, and if I had all the sins of this crowd in addition piled upon me, I could trust Jesus with them all at this moment now that I know him to be the Christ of God. He is the mighty God, and by his pierced hand the burden of our sins is easily removed ; he blotteth out our sins, he casts them into the depths of the sea.

But think of what Jesus the Son of God has done. He who was God, and thus blessed forever, left the throne and royalties of heaven, and stooped to yonder manger. There he lies ; his mother wraps him in swaddling clothes, he hangs

upon her breast ; the Infinite is clothed as an infant, the Invisible is made manifest in flesh, the Almighty is linked with weakness, for our sakes. Oh, matchless stoop of condescension ! If the Redeemer God does this in order to save us, shall it be thought a thing impossible for him to save the vilest of the vile ? Can any thing be too hard for him who comes from heaven to earth to redeem ?

Pause not because of astonishment, but press onward. Do you see him who was God over all, blessed forever, living more than thirty years in the midst of the sons of men, bearing the infirmities of manhood, taking upon himself our sicknesses, and sharing our sorrows ; his feet weary with treading the acres of Palestine ; his body faint oftentimes with hunger and thirst, and labor ; his knees knit to the earth with midnight prayer ; his eyes red with weeping (for oftentimes Jesus wept), tempted in all points like as we are ? Matchless spectacle ! An incarnate God dwells among sinners, and endures their contradiction ! What glory flashed forth ever and anon from the midst of his lowliness ! a glory which should render faith in him inevitable. Thou who didst walk the sea : thou who didst raise the dead, it is not rational to doubt thy power to forgive sins ! Didst thou not thyself put it so when thou badeest the man take up his bed and walk ? “ Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Rise up and walk ? ” Assuredly he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him : he was able even here on earth in weakness to forgive sins, much more now that he is seated in his glory. He is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

But, ah ! the master proof that in Christ Jesus there is “ bread enough and to spare,” is the cross. Will you follow me a moment, will you follow him, rather, to Gethsemane ? Can you see the bloody sweat as it falls upon the ground in his agony ? Can you think of his scourging before Herod and Pilate ? Can you trace him along the *Via*

Dolorosa of Jerusalem? Will your tender hearts endure to see him nailed to the tree, and lifted up to bleed and die? This is but the shell; as for the inward kernel of his sufferings no language can describe it, neither can conception peer into it. The everlasting God laid sin on Christ, and where the sin was laid there fell the wrath. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." Now he that died upon the cross was God's only begotten Son. Can you conceive a limit to the merit of such a Saviour's death? I know there are some who think it necessary to their system of theology to limit the merit of the blood of Jesus: if my system of theology needed such a limitation, I would cast it to the winds. I cannot, dare not, allow the thought to find a lodging in my mind; it seems so near akin to blasphemy. In Christ's finished work I see an ocean of merit; my plummet finds no bottom, my eye discovers no shore. There must be sufficient efficacy in the blood of Christ, if God had so willed it, to have saved not only all this world, but ten thousand worlds, had they transgressed the Maker's law. Once admit infinity into the matter, and limit is out of the question. Having a divine person for an offering, it is not consistent to conceive of limited value; bound and measure are terms inapplicable to the divine sacrifice. The intent of the divine purpose fixes the application of the infinite offering, but does not change it into a finite work. In the atonement of Christ Jesus there is "bread enough and to spare;" even as Paul wrote to Timothy, "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

But now let me lead you to another point of solemnly joyful consideration, and that is *the Holy Spirit*. To believe and love the Trinity is to possess the key of theology. We spoke of the Father, we spoke of the Son; let us now speak of the Holy Spirit. We do him all too little honor, for the Holy Spirit condescends to come to earth and dwell in our hearts; and notwithstanding all our provocations he still abides within his people. Now, sinner, thou needest a

new life and thou needest holiness, for both of these are necessary to make thee fit for heaven. Is there a provision for this? The Holy Spirit is provided and given in the covenant of grace; and surely in him there is "enough and to spare." What cannot the Holy Spirit do? Being divine, nothing can be beyond his power. Look at what he has already done. He moved upon the face of chaos, and brought it into order; all the beauty of creation arose beneath his moulding breath. We ourselves must confess with Elihu, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life." Think of the great deeds of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when men unlearned spake with tongues of which they knew not a syllable aforetime, and the flames of fire upon them were also within them, so that their hearts burned with zeal and courage to which they hitherto had been strangers. Think of the Holy Spirit's work on such a one as Saul of Tarsus. That persecutor foams blood, he is a very wolf, he would devour the saints of God at Damascus, and yet, within a few moments, you hear him say, "Who art thou, Lord?" and yet again, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" His heart is changed; the Spirit of God has new created it; the adamant is melted in a moment into wax. Many of us stand before you as the living monuments of what the Holy Ghost can do, and we can assure you from our own experience, that there is no inward evil which he cannot overcome, no lustful desire of the flesh which he cannot subdue, no obduracy of the affections which he cannot melt. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely no sinner can be beyond the possibilities of mercy when the Holy Spirit condescends to be the agent of human conversion. O sinner, if thou perish, it is not because the Holy Spirit wants power, or the blood of Jesus lacks efficacy, or the Father fails in love; it is because thou believest not in Christ, but dost abide in wilful rebellion, refusing the abundant bread of life which is placed before thee.

A few rapid sentences upon other things, which will go to show still further the greatness of the provision of divine mercy. Observe well that *throughout all the ages God has been sending one prophet after another*, and these prophets have been succeeded by apostles, and these by martyrs and confessors, and pastors and evangelists, and teachers; all these have been commissioned by the Lord in regular succession; and what has been the message they have had to deliver? They have all pointed to Christ, the great deliverer. Moses and the prophets all spoke of him, and so have all truly God-sent ambassadors. Dost thou think, sinner, that God has made all this fuss about a trifle? Has he sent all these servants to call thee to a table insufficiently furnished? Has he multiplied his invitations through so long a time to bid thee and others come to a provision which is not, after all, sufficient for them? Oh, it cannot be! God is not mocked, neither does he mock poor needy souls. The stores of his mercy are sufficient for the utmost emergencies.

“Rivers of love and mercy here
In a rich ocean join;
Salvation in abundance flows,
Like floods of milk and wine.

Great God, the treasures of thy love
Are everlasting mines,
Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins.”

Recollect, again, that *God has been pleased to stake his honor upon the gospel*. Men desire a name, and God also is jealous of his glory. Now, what has God been pleased to select for his name? Is it not the conversion and salvation of men? When instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree, and instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. And dost thou think God will get a name by saving little sinners by a little Saviour?

Ah ! his great name comes from washing out stains as black as hell, and pardoning sinners who were foulest of the foul. Is there one monstrous rebel here who is qualified to glorify God greatly, because his salvation will be the wonder of angels and the amazement of devils? I hope there is. O thou most degraded, black, loathsome sinner, nearest to being a damned sinner! if this voice can reach thee, I challenge thee to come and prove whether God's mercy is not a match for thy sin. Thou Goliath sinner, come thou hither; thou shalt find that God can slay thine enmity, and make thee yet his friend, and the more his loving and adoring servant, because great forgiveness shall secure great love. Such is the greatness of divine mercy, that "where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound."

Dost thou think, again, O sinner, that Jesus Christ came out of heaven to do a little deed, and to provide a slender store of mercy? Dost thou think he went up to Calvary, and down to the grave, and all, that he might do a commonplace thing, and provide a stinted, narrow, limited salvation, such as thine unbelief would imagine his redemption to be? No. We speak of the labors of Hercules, but these were child's play compared with the labors of Christ who slew the lion of hell, turned a purifying stream through the Augean stables of man's sin, and cleansed them, and performed ten thousand miracles besides: and will you so depreciate Christ as to imagine that what he has accomplished is, after all, little, so little that it is not enough to save you? If it were in my power to single out the man who has been the most dishonest, most licentious, most drunken, most profligate—in three words, most earthly, sensual, devilish—I would repeat the challenge which I gave just now, and bid him draw near to Jesus, and see whether the fountain filled with Christ's atoning blood cannot wash him white. I challenge him at this instant to come and cast himself at the dear Redeemer's feet, and see if he will say, "I cannot save thee, thou hast sinned beyond my power." It shall never,

never, never be, for he is able to the uttermost to save. He is a Saviour, and a great one. Christ will be honored by the grandeur of the grace which he bestows upon the greatest of offenders. There is in him pardon "enough and to spare."

I must leave this point, but I cannot do so without adding that I think "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE" might be taken for the motto of the gospel. I believe in particular redemption, and that Christ laid down his life for his sheep; but, as I have already said, I do not believe in the limited value of that redemption; how else could I dare to read the words of John, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." There is a sure portion for his own elect, but there is also over and above "to spare." I believe in the electing love which will save all its objects—"bread enough;" but I believe in boundless benevolence, "Bread enough *and to spare*." We, when we have a purpose to accomplish, put forth the requisite quantity of strength and no more, for we must be economical, we must not waste our limited store; even charity gives the poor man no more than he absolutely needs; but when God feeds the multitude, he spreads the board with imperial bounty. Our water-cart runs up and down the favored road, but when heaven's clouds would favor the good man's fields, they deluge whole nations, and even pour themselves upon the sea. There is no real waste with God; but at the same time there is no stint. "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE;" write that inscription over the house of mercy, and let every hungry passer-by be encouraged thereby to enter in and eat.

II. We must now pass on to a second consideration, and dwell very briefly on it. According to the text, there was not only bread enough in the house, but THE LOWEST IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE ENJOYED ENOUGH AND TO SPARE.

We can never make a parable run on all-fours, therefore

we cannot find the exact counterpart of the "hired servants." I understand the prodigal to have meant this, that the very lowest menial servant employed by his father had bread to eat, and had "bread enough and to spare." Now, how should we translate this? Why, sinner, the very lowest creature that God has made, that has not sinned against him, is well supplied and has abounding happiness. There are adaptations for pleasure in the organizations of the lowest animals. See how the gnats dance in the summer's sunbeam; hear the swallows as they scream with delight when on the wing. He who cares for birds and insects will surely care for men. God who hears the ravens when they cry, will he not hear the returning penitent? He gives these insects happiness; did he mean me to be wretched? Surely he who opens his hand and supplies the lack of every living thing, will not refuse to open his hand and supply my needs if I seek his face.

Yet I must not make these lowest creatures to be the hired servants. Whom shall I then select among men? I will put it thus. The very worst of sinners that have come to Christ have found grace "enough and to spare," and the very least of saints who dwell in the house of the Lord find love "enough and to spare." Take then *the most guilty of sinners*, and see how bountifully the Lord treats them when they turn unto him. Did not some of you, who are yourselves unconverted, once know persons who were at least as bad, perhaps more outwardly immoral than yourselves? Well, they have been converted, though you have not been; and when they were converted, what was their testimony? Did the blood of Christ avail to cleanse them? Oh, yes; and more than cleanse them, for it added to beauty not their own. They were naked once; was Jesus able to clothe them? Was there a sufficient covering in his righteousness? Ah, yes! and adornment was superadded; they received not a bare apparel, but a royal raiment. You have seen others thus liberally treated, does not this induce you

also to come? Some of us need not confine our remarks to others, for we can speak personally of ourselves. We came to Jesus as full of sin as ever *you* can be, and felt ourselves beyond measure lost and ruined; but, oh, his tender love! I could sooner stand here and weep than speak to you of it. My soul melts in gratitude when I think of the infinite mercy of God to me in that hour when I came seeking mercy at his hands. Oh! why will not you also come? May his Holy Spirit sweetly draw you! I proved that there was bread enough, mercy enough, forgiveness enough, and to spare. Come along, come along, poor guilty one; come along, there is room enough for thee.

Now, if the chief of sinners bear this witness, so do *the most obscure of saints*. If we could call forth from his seat a weak believer in God, who is almost unknown in the church, one who sometimes questions whether he is indeed a child of God, and would be willing to be a hired servant so long as he might belong to God, and if I were to ask him, "Now after all how has the Lord dealt with you?" what would be his reply? You have many afflictions, doubts and fears, but have you any complaints against your Lord? When you have waited upon him for daily grace, has he denied you? When you have been full of troubles, has he refused you comfort? When you have been plunged in distress, has he declined to deliver you? The Lord himself asks, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" Testify against the Lord, ye his people, if ye have aught against him. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, whosoever there be in God's service who has found him a hard task-master, let him speak. Among the angels before Jehovah's throne, and among men redeemed on earth, if there be any one that can say he hath been dealt with unjustly or treated with ungenerous churlishness, let him lift up his voice! But there is not one. Even the devil himself, when he spoke of God and of his servant Job, said "Doth Job serve God for nought?" Of course he did not: God will not let his servants serve him

for nought ; he will pay them superabundant wages, and they shall all bear witness that at his table there is "bread enough and to spare." Now, if these still enjoy the bread of the Father's house, these who were once great sinners, these who are now only very commonplace saints, surely, sinner it should encourage you to say, "I will arise and go to my Father," for his hired servants "have bread enough and to spare."

III. Notice in the third place, that the text dwells upon THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE WHO HAVE "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE." The prodigal lays an emphasis upon that word, "*How many* hired servants of my father's !" He was thinking of their great number, and counting them over. He thought of those that tended the cattle, of those that went out with the camels, of those that watched the sheep, and those that minded the corn, and those that waited in the house ; he ran them over in his mind : his father was great in the land, and had many servants ; yet he knew that they all had of the best food "enough and to spare." "Why should I perish with hunger ? I am only one at any rate ; though my hunger seem insatiable, it is but one belly that has to be filled, and, lo, my father fills hundreds, thousands every day ; why should I perish with hunger ?" Now, O thou awakened sinner, thou who dost feel this morning thy sin and misery, think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed his grace already. Think of the countless hosts in heaven : if thou wert introduced there to-day, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now.

They have come from the east and from the west, and they are sitting down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, and there is room enough for thee. And beside those in heaven, think of those on earth. Blessed be God, his elect on earth are to be counted by millions, I believe, and the days are coming, brighter days than these, when there

shall be multitudes upon multitudes brought to know the Saviour, and to rejoice in him. The Father's love is not for a few only, but for an exceeding great company. A number that no man can number will be found in heaven, Now, a man can number a very great amount. Set to work your Newtons, your calculators, they can count great numbers, but God and God alone can tell the multitude of his redeemed. Now, sinner, thou art but one at any rate, great sinner as thou art, and the mercy of God which embraces millions must have room enough in it for thee. The sea which holds the whales and creeping things innumerable, dost thou say, "It will overflow its banks if I bathe therein?" The sun which floods the universe with light, canst thou say, "I should exhaust his beams if I should ask him to enlighten my darkness?" Say not so. If thou comest to thyself thou wilt not tolerate such a thought, but thou wilt remember with hope the richness of the Father's grace, even though thine own poverty stare thee in the face.

Let us add a few words to close with, close grappling words to some of you to whom God has sent his message this morning, and whom he intends to save. Oh you who have been long hearers of the gospel, and who know it well in theory, but have felt none of the power of it in your hearts, let me now remind you where and what you are! You are perishing. As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between you and death; but a step, nay, but a breath between you and hell. Sinner, if at this moment thy heart should cease its beating, and there are a thousand causes that might produce that result ere the clock ticks again, thou wouldst be in the flames of divine wrath. Canst thou bear to be in such peril? If you were hanging over a rock by a slender thread which must soon break, and if you would then fall headlong down a terrible precipice, you would not sleep, but be full of alarm. May you have sense enough, wit enough, grace enough, to be alarmed until you escape from the wrath to come.

Recollect, however, that while you are perishing, you are perishing in sight of plenty ; you are famishing where a table is abundantly spread ; what is more, there are those whom you know now sitting at that table and feasting. What sad perversity for a man to persist in being starved in the midst of a banquet, where others are being satisfied with good things !

But I think I hear you say, "I fear I have no right to come to Jesus." I will ask you this : have you any right to say that till you have been denied ? Did you ever try to go to Christ ? Has he ever rejected you ? If then you have never received a repulse, why do you wickedly imagine that he would repel you ? Wickedly, I say, for it is an offence against the Christ who opened his heart upon the cross, to imagine that he could repel a penitent. Have you any right to say, "But I am not one of those for whom mercy is provided" ? Who told you so ? Have you climbed to heaven and read the secret records of God's election ? Has the Lord revealed a strange decree to you, and said, "Go and despair, I will have no pity on you" ? If you say that God has so spoken, I do not believe you. In this sacred book is recorded what God has said, here is the sure word of testimony, and in it I find it said of no humble seeker, that God hath shut him out from his grace. Why hast thou a right to invent such a fiction in order to secure thine own damnation ? Instead thereof, there is much in the word of God and elsewhere to encourage thee in coming to Christ. He has not repelled one sinner yet ; that is good to begin with : it is not likely that he would, for since he died to save sinners, why should he reject them when they seek to be saved ? You say, "I am afraid to come to Christ." Is that wise ? I have heard of a poor navigator who had been converted, who had but little education, but who knew the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when dying, very cheerfully and joyfully longed to depart. His wife said to him, "But, mon, ain't ye afeared to stand be-

fore the Judge?" "Woman," said he, "why should I be afear'd of a man as died for me?" Oh, why should you be afraid of Christ who died for sinners? The idea of being afraid of him should be banished by the fact that he shed his blood for the guilty. You have much reason to believe from the very fact that he died, that he will receive you. Besides, you have his word for it, for he saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"—for no reason, and in no way, and on no occasion, and under no pretence, and for no motive. "I will not cast him out," says the original. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You say it is too good to be true that there can be pardon for you: this is a foolish measuring of God's corn with your bushel, and because it seems too good a thing for you to receive, you fancy it is too good for God to bestow. Let the greatness of the good news be one reason for believing that the news is true, for it is so like God.

"Who is a pardoning God like thee?

Or who hath grace so rich and free?"

Because the gospel assures us that he forgives great sins through a great Saviour, it looks as if it were true, since he is so great a God.

What should be the result of all this with every sinner here at this time? I think this good news should arouse those who have almost gone to sleep through despair. The sailors have been pumping the vessel, the leaks are gaining, she is going down, the captain is persuaded she must be a wreck. Depressed by such evil tidings, the men refuse to work; and since the boats are all stove in and they cannot make a raft, they sit down in despair. Presently the captain has better news for them. "She will float," he says; "the wind is abating too, the pumps tell upon the water, the leak can be reached yet." See how they work; with what cheery courage they toil on, because there is hope! Soul, there is hope! *There is hope!* THERE IS HOPE! To the harlot, to the thief, to the drunkard.

“There is no hope,” says Satan. Liar that thou art, get thee back to thy den ; for thee there is no hope ; but for fallen man, though he be in the mire of sin up to his very neck, though he be at the gates of death, while he lives there is hope. There is hope for hopeless souls in the Saviour.

In addition to arousing us, this ought to elevate the sinner’s thoughts. Some years ago, there was a crossing-sweeper in Dublin, with his broom, at the corner, and in all probability his highest thoughts were to keep the crossing clean, and look for the pence. One day, a lawyer put his hand upon his shoulder, and said to him, “My good fellow, do you know that you are heir to a fortune of ten thousand pounds a year?” “Do you mean it?” said he. “I do,” he said. “I have just received the information ; I am sure you are the man.” He walked away, *and he forgot his broom.* Are you astonished? Why, who would not have forgotten a broom when suddenly made possessor of ten thousand a year? So, I pray that some poor sinners, who have been thinking of the pleasures of the world, when they hear that there is hope, and that there is heaven to be had, will forget the deceitful pleasures of sin, and follow after higher and better things.

Should it not also purify the mind? The prodigal, when he said, “I will arise and go to my father,” became in a measure reformed from that very moment. How? say you. Why, he left the swine-trough : more, he left the wine cup, and he left the harlots. He did not go with the harlot on his arm, and the wine cup in his hand, and say, “I will take these with me, and go to my father.” It could not be. These were all left, and though he had no goodness to bring, yet he did not try to keep his sins and come to Christ. I shall close with this remark, because it will act as a sort of *caveat*, and be a fit word to season the wide invitations of the free gospe.. Some of you, I fear, will make mischief even out of the gospel, and will dare to take the cross and use it for a gibbet for your souls. If God is so merciful, you

will go therefore and sin the more ; and because grace is freely given, therefore you will continue in sin that grace may abound. If you do this, I would solemnly remind you I have no grace to preach to such as you. “ Your damnation is just ; ” it is the word of inspiration, and the only one I know that is applicable to such as you are ; but every needy, guilty soul that desires a Saviour is told to-day to believe in Jesus, that is, trust in the substitution and sacrifice of Christ, trust him to take your sin and blot it out ; trust him to take your soul and save it. Trust Christ entirely, and you are forgiven this very moment ; you are saved this very instant, and you may rejoice now in the fact that being justified by faith you have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. O come ye, come ye, come ye ; come and welcome ; come ye now to the Redeemer’s blood. Holy Spirit, compel them to come in, that the house of mercy may be filled. Amen, and Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

LOVE'S LOGIC.

“WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.”—1 John iv. 19.

THIS is a great doctrinal truth, and I might with much propriety preach a doctrinal sermon from it, of which the sum and substance would be the sovereign grace of God. God's love is evidently prior to ours: “He first loved us.” It is also clear enough from the text that God's love is the cause of ours, for “We love him because he first loved us.” Therefore, going back to old time, or rather before all time, when we find God loving us with an everlasting love, we gather that the reason of his choice is not because we loved him, but because he willed to love us. His reasons, and he had reasons (for we read of “the counsel of his will”), are known to himself, but they are not to be found in any inherent goodness in us, or which was foreseen to be in us. We were chosen simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. He loved us because he would love us. The gift of his dear Son, which was a close consequent upon his choice of his people, was too great a sacrifice on God's part to have been drawn from him by any goodness in the creature. It was not possible for the highest piety to have deserved so vast a boon as the gift of the Only-begotten; it was not possible for any thing in man to have merited the incarnation and the passion of the Redeemer. Our redemption, like our election, springs from the spontaneous, self-originating love of God. And our regeneration, in which we are made actual partakers of the divine blessings in Jesus Christ, was

not of us, nor by us. We were not converted because we were already inclined that way, neither were we regenerated because some good thing was in us by nature ; but we owe our new birth entirely to his potent love, which dealt with us effectually, turning us from death to life, from darkness to light, and from the alienation of our mind and the enmity of our spirit into that delightful path of love, in which we are now travelling to the skies. As believers on Christ's name, we "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The sum and substance of the text is, that God's uncaused love, springing up within himself, has been the sole means of bringing us into the condition of loving him. Our love to him is like a trickling rill, speeding its way to the ocean because it first came from the ocean. All the rivers run into the sea, but their floods first arose from it : the clouds that were exhaled from the mighty main distilled in showers and filled the water-brooks. Here was their first cause and prime origin ; and, as if they recognized the obligation, they pay tribute in return to the parent source. The ocean love of God, so broad that even the wing of imagination could not traverse it, sends forth its treasures of the rain of grace, which drop upon our hearts, which are as the pastures of the wilderness ; they make our hearts to overflow, and in streams of gratitude the life imparted flows back again to God. All good things are of thee, Great God ; thy goodness creates our good ; thine infinite love to us draws forth our love to thee.

But, dear friends, I trust after many years of instruction in the doctrines of our holy faith, I need not keep to the beaten doctrinal track, but may lead you in a parallel path, in which the same truth may be seen from another point. I purpose to preach an experimental sermon, and possibly this will be even more in accordance with the run of the passage and the mind of its writer, than a doctrinal discourse. We shall view the text as a fact which we have tested and proved in our own consciousness. Under this

aspect the statement of the text is this :—*a sense of the love of God to us is the main cause of our love to him.* When we believe, know, and feel that God loves us, we, as a natural result, love him in return ; and in proportion as our knowledge increases, our faith strengthens, and our conviction deepens that we are really beloved of God ; we, from the very constitution of our being, are constrained to yield our hearts to God in return. The discourse of this morning, therefore, will run in that channel. God grant it may be blessed to each of us by his Holy Spirit.

I. At the outset we will consider THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LOVE TO GOD IN THE HEART.

There are some graces which in their vigor are not absolutely essential to the bare existence of spiritual life, though very important for its healthy growth ; but love to God must be in the heart, or else there is no grace there whatever. If any man love not God, he is not a renewed man. Love to God is a mark which is always set upon Christ's sheep, and never set upon any others. In enlarging upon this most important truth, I would call your attention to the connection of the text. You will find in the seventh verse of this chapter, that love to God is set down as being a necessary *mark of the new birth*. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." I have no right, therefore, to believe that I am a regenerated person unless my heart truly and sincerely loves God. It is vain for me, if I love not God, to quote the register which records an ecclesiastical ceremony, and say that this regenerated me ; it certainly did no such thing, or the sure result would have followed. If I have been regenerated I may not be perfect, but this one thing I can say, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." When by believing we receive the privilege to become the sons of God, we receive also the nature of sons, and with filial love we cry, "Abba, Father." There is no exception to this rule ; if a man loves not God, neither is he born of God. Show me a

fire without heat, then show me regeneration that does not produce love to God ; for as the sun must give forth its light, so must a soul that has been created anew by divine grace display its nature by sincere affection towards God. "Ye must be born again," but ye are not born again unless ye love God. How indispensable, then, is love to God.

In the eighth verse we are told also that love to God is a *mark of our knowing God*. True knowledge is essential to salvation. God does not save us in the dark. He is our "light and our salvation." We are renewed *in knowledge* after the image of him that created us. Now, "he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." All you have ever been taught from the pulpit, all you have ever studied from the Scriptures, all you have ever gathered from the learned, all you have collected from the libraries, all this is no knowledge of God at all unless you love God ; for in true religion, to love and to know God are synonymous terms. Without love you remain in ignorance still, ignorance of the most unhappy and ruinous kind. All attainments are transitory, if love be not as a salt to preserve them ; tongues must cease and knowledge must vanish away ; love alone abides forever. This love you must have or be a fool forever. All the children of the true Zion are taught of the Lord, but you are not taught of God unless you love God. See, then, that to be devoid of love to God is to be devoid of all true knowledge of God, and so of all salvation.

Further, the chapter teaches us that love to God is the *root of love to others*. The eleventh verse says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Now no man is a Christian who does not love Christians. He, who, being in the church, is yet not of it heart and soul, is but an intruder in the family. But since love to our brethren springs out of love to our one common Father, it is plain that we must have love to that Father, or else we shall fail in one of the indispensable marks of the

children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren;" but we cannot truly love the brethren unless we love the Father; therefore, lacking love to God, we lack love to the church, which is an essential mark of grace.

Again, keeping to the run of the passage, you will find by the eighteenth verse, that love to God is a chief *means of that holy peace* which is an essential mark of a Christian. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" but where there is no love there is no such peace; for fear, which hath torment, distresses the soul; hence love is the indispensable companion of faith, and when they come together, peace is the result. Where there is fervent love to God there is set up a holy familiarity with God, and from this flow satisfaction, delight, and rest. Love must co-operate with faith and cast out fear, so that the soul may have boldness before God. Oh! Christian, thou canst not have the nature of God implanted within thee by regeneration, it cannot reveal itself in love to the brotherhood, it cannot blossom with the fair flowers of peace and joy, except thine affection be set upon God. Let him, then, be thine exceeding joy. Delight thyself also in the Lord. "O love the Lord ye his saints."

We also see, if we turn again to John's epistle and pursue his observations to the next chapter and the third verse, that love is the *spring of true obedience*. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Now a man who is not obedient to God's commandments is evidently not a true believer; for, although good works do not save us, yet, being saved, believers are sure to produce good works. Though the fruit be not the root of the tree, yet a well-rooted tree will, in its season, bring forth its fruits. So, though the keeping of the commandments does not make me a child of God, yet, being a child of God, I shall be obedient to my heavenly Father. But this I cannot be unless I love God. A mere external obedience, a decent

formal recognition of the laws of God, is not obedience in God's sight. He abhors the sacrifice where not the heart is found. I must obey because I love, or else I have not in spirit and in truth obeyed at all. See then, that to produce the indispensable fruits of saving faith, there must be love to God; for without it, they would be unreal and indeed impossible.

I hope it is not necessary for me to pursue this argument any further. Love to God is as natural to the renewed heart as love to its mother is to a babe. Who needs to reason a child into love? As certainly as you have the life and nature of God in you, you will seek after the Lord. As the spark, because it has in it the nature of fire, ascends aloft to seek the sun, so will your new-born spirit seek her God, from whom she has derived her life. Search yourselves, then, and see whether you love God or no. Put your hands on your hearts, and as in the sight of him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, answer to him; make him your confessor at this hour; answer this one question: "Lovest thou me?" I trust very many of you will be able to say—

"Yes, we love thee and adore;

Oh, for grace to love thee more."

This much was necessary to bring us to the second step of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us onward.

II. You see the indispensable importance of love to God: let us now learn THE SOURCE AND SPRING OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD. "We love him because he first loved us." Love to God, wherever it really exists, has been created in the bosom by a belief of God's love to us. No man loves God till he knows that God loves him; and every believer loves God for this reason first and chiefly, that God loves him. He has seen himself to be unworthy of divine favor, yet he has believed God's love in the gift of his dear Son, and he has accepted the atonement that Christ has made as a proof of God's love, and now being satisfied of the divine affection towards him, he of necessity loves his God.

Observe, then, that love to God does not begin in the heart from any disinterested admiration of the nature of God. I believe that, after we have loved God because he first loved us, we may so grow in grace as to love God for what he is. I suppose it is possible for us to be the subjects of a state of heart in which our love spends itself upon the loveliness of God in his own person: we may come to love him because he is so wise, so powerful, so good, so patient, so every thing that is lovable. This may be produced within us as the ripe fruit of maturity in the divine life, but it is never the first spring and fountain of the grace of love in any man's heart. Even the apostle John, the man who had looked within the veil and seen the excellent glory beyond any other man, and who had leaned his head upon the bosom of the Lord, and had seen the Lord's holiness, and marked the inimitable beauty of the character of the incarnate God, even John does not say, "We love him because we admire him," but "We love him because he first loved us." For see brethren, if this kind of love which I have mentioned, which is called the love of disinterested admiration, were required of a sinner, I do not see how he could readily render it. There are two gentlemen of equal rank in society, and the one is not at all obliged to the other; now, they, standing on an equality, can easily feel a disinterested admiration of each other's characters, and a consequent disinterested affection; but I, a poor sinner, by nature sunk in the mire, full of every thing that is evil, condemned, guilty of death, so that my only desert is to be cast into hell, am under such obligations to my Saviour and my God, that it would be idle for me to talk about a disinterested affection for him, since I owe to him my life, my all. Besides, until I catch the gleams of his mercy and his loving-kindness to the guilty, his holy, just, and righteous character are not lovable to me, I dread the purity which condemns my defilement, and shudder at the justice which will consume me for my sin. Do not, O seeker, trouble your heart with nice distinctions

about disinterested love, but be you content with the beloved disciple, to love Christ because he first loved you.

Again, our love to God does not spring from the self-determining power of the will. I greatly question whether any thing does in the world, good or bad. There are some who set up the will as a kind of deity,—it doeth as it wills with earth and heaven; but in truth the will is not a master but a servant. To the sinner his will is a slave; and in the saint, although the will is set free, it is still blessedly under bonds to God. Men do not will a thing because they will it, but because their affections, their passions, or their judgments influence their wills in that direction. No man can stand up and truly say, “I, unbiassed and unaided, will to love God and I will not to love Satan.” Such proud self-assuming language would prove him a liar; the man would be clearly a worshipper of himself. A man can only love God when he has perceived some reasons for so doing; and the first argument for loving God, which influences the intellect so as to turn the affections, is the reason mentioned in the text: “We love him because he first loved us.”

Now, having thus set the text in a negative light, let us look at it in a more positive manner.

It is certain, beloved brethren, that faith in the heart always precedes love. We first believe the love of God to us before we love God in return. And, Oh what an encouraging truth this is. I, a sinner, do not believe that God loves me because I feel I love him; but I first believe that he loves me, sinner as I am, and then having believed that gracious fact, I come to love my Benefactor in return. Perhaps some of you seekers are saying to yourselves, “Oh, that we could love God, for then we could hope for mercy.” That is not the first step. Your first step is to believe that God loves you, and when that truth is fully fixed in your soul by the Holy Spirit, a fervent love to God will spontaneously issue from your soul, even as flowers willingly pour forth their fragrance under the influence of the dew and the

sun. Every man that ever was saved had to come to God not as a lover of God, but as a sinner, and to believe in God's love to him as a sinner. We all wish to take money in our sacks when we go down hungry to this Egypt to buy the bread of life; but it must not be; heaven's bread is given to us freely, and we must accept it freely, without money and without price. Do you say, "I do not feel in my heart one good emotion; I do not appear to possess one good thought; I fear I have no love to God at all." Do not remain in unbelief until you feel this love, for if you do, you will never believe at all. You ought to love God, it is true, but you never will till you believe him, and especially believe in his love as revealed in his only begotten Son. If you come to God in Christ, and believe this simple message; "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," you shall find your heart going out after God. "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" believest thou this? Canst thou now believe in Jesus; that is, trust him? Then, Christ died for thee; Christ the Son of God, in thy stead, suffered for thy guilt. God gave his only Son to die for thee. "Oh," saith one, "If I believed that, how I would love God!" Yes, indeed, thou wouldst, and that is the only consideration which can make thee do so. Thou, a sinner, must take Christ to be thy Saviour, and then love to God shall spring up spontaneously in thy soul, as the grass after showers. Love believed is the mother of love returned. The planet reflects light, but first of all it receives it from the sun; the heliotrope turns its face to the orb of day, but first the sunbeams warm and woo it. You shall turn to God, and delight in God, and rejoice in God; but it must be because you first of all believe, and know, and confide in the love of God to you. "Oh," saith one, "it cannot be that God should love an unloving sinner, that the pure One should love the impure, that the Ruler of all should love his enemy." Hear what the Lord saith; "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways

my ways, saith the Lord. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." You think that God loves men because they are godly, but listen to this: "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Think of his "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." God has love in his heart towards those who have nothing in them to love. He loves you, poor soul, who feel that you are most unlovable; loves you who mourn over a stony heart, which will not warm or melt with love to him. Thus saith the Lord: "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." O that God's gracious voice this morning might so call some of his poor wandering ones that they may come and believe his love to them, and then cast themselves at his feet to be his servants forever.

Brethren, rest assured that in proportion as we are fully persuaded of God's love to us, we shall be affected with love to him. Do not let the devil tempt you to believe that God does not love you because your love is feeble; for if he can weaken your belief in God's love to you, he cuts off or diminishes the flow of the streams which feed the sacred grace of love to God. If I lament that I do not love God as I ought, that is a holy regret; but if I, therefore, conclude that God's love to me is the less because of this, I deny the light because my eye is dim, and I deprive myself also of the power to increase in love. Let me rather think more and more of the greatness of God's love to me, as I see more and more my unworthiness of it; the more a sinner I am, let me the more fully see how great must be that love which embraces such a sinner as I am; and then, as I receive a deeper sense of the divine mercy, I shall feel the more bound

to gratitude and constrained to affection. Oh for a great wave of love, to carry us right out into the ocean of love.

Observe, beloved brethren, day by day the deeds of God's love to you in the gift of food and raiment, and in the mercies of this life, and especially in the covenant blessings which God gives you, the peace which he sheds abroad in your hearts, the communion which he vouchsafes to you with himself and his blessed Son, and the answers to prayer which he grants you. Note well these things, and if you consider them carefully, and weigh their value, you will be accumulating the fuel on which love feeds its consecrated flame. In proportion as you see in every good gift a **few** token of your Father's love, in that proportion will you make progress in the sweet school of love. Oh, it is **heav-**enly living to taste God's love in every morsel of bread we eat ; it is blessed living to know that we breathe an atmosphere purified and made fragrant with divine love, that love protects us while we sleep, hanging like a silken curtain all around our bed, and love opens the eyelids of the morning to smile upon us when we wake. Ah, even when we are sick, it is love that chastens us ; when we are impoverished, love relieves us of a burden ; love gives and love takes ; love cheers and love smites. We are compassed about with love, above, beneath, around, within, without. If we could but recognize this, we should become as flames of fire, ardent and fervent towards our God. Knowledge and observation are admirable nurses of our infant love.

And, ah, the soul grows rich in love to God when she rests on the bosom of divine loving-kindness. You, who are tossed about with doubts and fears as to whether you are now accepted or shall persevere to the end, you can scarcely guess the ardors of heart which inflame those saints who have learned to cast themselves wholly upon Jesus, and know beyond a doubt his love immutable. Whether I sink or swim, I have no hope but in Christ, my life, my all.

"I know that safe with him remains,
Protected by his power,
What I've committed to his hands
Till the decisive hour:"

And in proportion as I am thus scripturally confident, and rest in my Lord, will my love to him engross all my heart, and consecrate my life to the Redeemer's glory.

Beloved, I desire to make this very clear, that to feel love to God we must tread along the road of faith. Truly, this is not a hard or perilous way, but one prepared by infinite wisdom. It is a road suitable for sinners, and indeed saints must come that way too. If thou wouldst love God, do not look within thee to see whether this grace or that be as it ought to be, but look to thy God, and read his eternal love, his boundless love, his costly love, which gave Christ for thee; then shall thy love drink in fresh life and vigor.

Remember wherever there is love to God in the soul it is an argument that God loves that soul. I recollect meeting once with a Christian woman who said she knew she loved God, but she was afraid God did not love her. That is a fear so preposterous that it ought never to occur to anybody. You would not love God in deed and in truth unless he had shed abroad his love in your heart in a measure. But on the other hand, our not loving God is not a conclusive argument that God does not love us; else might the sinner be afraid to come to God. O loveless sinner with heart unquickened and chill, the voice of God calls even thee to Christ. Even to the dead in sin, his voice saith "Live." Whilst thou art yet polluted in thy blood, cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, the Lord of mercy passes by, and says "live." His mighty sovereignty comes forth dressed in robes of love, and he touches thee the unlovable, the loveless, the depraved, degraded sinner, at enmity with God,—he touches thee in all thine alienation and he lifts thee out of it and makes thee to love

him, not for thine own sake, but for his name's sake and for his mercy's sake. Thou hadst no love at all to him, but all the love lay in him alone; and therefore he began to bless thee, and will continue to bless thee world without end, if thou art a believer in Jesus. In the bosom of the Eternal are the deep springs of all love.

III. This leads us, in the third place, to consider for a moment THE REVIVAL OF OUR LOVE. It is sadly probable that there are in this house some who once loved God very earnestly, but now they have declined and become grievously indifferent; God's love to us never changes, but ours too often sinks to a low ebb. Perhaps some of you have become so cold in your affections, that it is difficult to be sure that you ever did love God at all. It may be that your life has become lax, so as to deserve the censure of the Church. You are a backslider and you are in a dangerous condition; yet, if there be indeed spiritual life in you, you will wish to return. You have gone astray like a lost sheep, but your prayer is, "seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." Now, note well, that the cause which originated your love is the same which must restore it. You went to Christ as a sinner at first, and your first act was to believe the love of God to you when there was nothing in you that evidenced it. Go the same way again. Do not stop, my dear brother, to pump up love out of the dry well within yourself! Do not think it possible that love will come at your bidding. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. Think of the Lord's unchanging grace, and you will feel the spring-time of love returning to your soul. Still doth the Lord reserve mercy for the sinful, still he waiteth to be gracious; he is as willing to receive you now that you have played the prodigal, as he was to have retained you at home in the bosom of his love. Many considerations ought to aid you, a backslider, to believe more in the love of God

than ever you did. For think what love it must be that can invite you still to return, you, who after knowing so much have sinned against light and knowledge; you, who after having experienced so much, have given the lie to your profession. He might justly have cut you down, for you have cumbered the ground long enough. Surely, when Israel went astray from God, it was a clear proof to her of Jehovah's love when he graciously said, "They say if a man put away his wife, or she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again?" Why, the answer in every bosom is "No!" Who would love a wife who had so polluted herself? But thus saith the Lord, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me." What matchless love is this. Hear yet more of these gracious words, which you will find in the third chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy. "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever." "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Can you hear these words without emotion? Backslider! I pray thee take the wings of God's love to fly back to him with. But I hear you inquiring, Will he still receive me? Shall I be once more—

"To the Father's bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed?"

It shall be so. Does he not declare that he is God and changes not, and therefore you are not consumed? Re-kindled are the flames of love in the backslider's bosom when he feels all this to be true; he cries, "Behold, we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God." I pray you, then, any of you who are conscious of gross derelictions of duty, and wanderings of heart, do not ask Moses to lead you back

to Christ, he knows the way to Sinai's flames, but not to Calvary's pardoning blood. Go to Christ himself at once. If you go to the law and begin to judge yourself, if you get the notion that you are to undergo a sort of spiritual quarantine, that you must pass through a mental purgatory before you may renew your faith in the Saviour, you are mistaken. Come just as you are, bad as you are, hardened, cold, dead as you feel yourselves to be, come even so, and believe in the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus. Then shall come the deep repentance ; then shall come the brokenness of heart ; then shall come the holy jealousy, the sacred hatred of sin, and the refining of the soul from all her dross ; then, indeed, all good things shall come to restore your soul, and lead you in the paths of righteousness. Do not look for these first ; that would be looking for the effects before the cause. The great cause of love in the restored backslider must still be the love of God to him, to whom he clings with a faith that dares not let go its hold.

"But," saith one, "I think it is very dangerous to tell the backslider to believe in God's love, surely it will be gross presumption for him so to believe." It is never presumptuous for a man to believe the truth ; whether a statement be comfortable or uncomfortable, the presumption does not lie in the matter itself, but in its untruthfulness. I say again, it is never presumptuous to believe the truth. And this is the truth, that the Lord loves his prodigal sons still, and his stray sheep still, and he will devise means to bring his banished back again, that they perish not. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Remember here, that the motive power which draws back the backslider again is the cord of love, the band of a man, which makes him feel he must go back to God with weeping and repentance, because God loves him still. What man among you this morning hath a son who has disobeyed him and gone from him, and is living in drunkenness, and in all manner of lust ? If you have in anger told him, so that he

doubts it not, that you have struck his name out of your family, and will not regard him as a child any longer, do you think that your severity will induce him to return to you in love? Far from it. But suppose instead thereof, you still assure him that you love him; that there is always a place at your table for him, and a bed in your house for him, ay, and better still, a warm place in your heart for him; suppose he sees your tears and hears your prayers for him, will not this draw him? Yes, indeed, if he be a son. It is even thus between thy God and thee, O backslider. Hear ye the Lord as he argues thy case within his own heart. "My people are bent to backsliding from me; though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Surely, if any thing will draw you back, this will. "Ah!" saith the wandering son, "my dear father loves me still. I will arise and go to him. I will not vex so tender a heart. I will be his loving son again." God does not say to you prodigals, who once professed his name, "I have unchilded you, I have cast you away," but he says, "I love you still; and for my name's sake will I restrain my wrath that I cut you not off." Come to your offended Father, and you shall find that he has not repented of his love, but will embrace you still.

IV. Time fails, but I must speak for a little, time or no time, upon the fourth point—THE PERFECTING OF OUR LOVE TO God.

Beloved, there are few of us who know much of the depths of the love of God; our love is shallow; ah, how shallow! Love to God is like a great mountain. The majority of travellers view it from afar, or traverse the valley at its base:

a few climb to a halting-place on one of its elevated spurs, whence they see a portion of its sublimities : here and there an adventurous traveller climbs a minor peak, and views glacier and alp at closer range ; fewest of all are those who scale the topmost pinnacle and tread the virgin snow. So in the Church of God. Every Christian abides under the shadow of divine love : a few enjoy and return that love to a remarkable degree ; but there are few, in this age sadly few, who reach to seraphic love, who ascend into the hill of the Lord, to stand where the eagle's eye hath not seen, and walk the path which the lion's whelp hath never trodden, the high places of complete consecration and ardent self-consuming love. Now, mark you, it may be difficult to ascend so high, but there is one sure route, and only one, which the man must follow who would gain the sacred elevation. It is not the track of his works, nor the path of his own actions, but this, "We love him because he first loved us." John and the apostles confessed that thus they attained their love. For the highest love that ever glowed in human bosom there was no source but this—God first loved that man. Do you not see how this is ? The knowledge that God loves me casts out my tormenting dread of God : and when this is expelled, there is room for abounding love to God. As fear goes out, love comes in at the other door. So the more faith in God the more room there is for soul-filling love.

Again, strong faith in God's love brings great enjoyment ; our heart is glad, our soul is satisfied with marrow and fatness when we know that the whole heart of God beats towards us as forcibly as if we were the only creatures he had ever made, and his whole heart were wrapt up in us. This deep enjoyment creates the flaming love of which I have just now spoken.

If the ardent love of some saints often takes the shape of admiration of God, this arises from their familiarity with God, and this familiarity they never would have indulged in, unless they had known that he was their friend. A man

could not speak to God as to a friend, unless he knew the love God hath toward him. The more true his knowledge and the more sure, the more close his fellowship.

Brethren beloved, if you know that God has loved you, then you will feel grateful ; every doubt will diminish your gratitude, but every grain of faith will increase it. Then as we advance in grace, love to God in our soul will excite desire after him. Those we love we long to be with—we count the hours that separate us ; no place so happy as that in which we enjoy their society. Hence love to God produces a desire to be with him ; a desire to be like him, a longing to be with him eternally in heaven, and this breaks us away from worldliness. This keeps us from idolatry, and thus has a most blessedly sanctifying effect upon us, producing that elevated character which is now so rare, but which wherever it exists is powerful for the good of the church and for the glory of God. Oh that we had many in this church who had reached the highest platform of piety. Would God we had a band of men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost ; strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. It may help those who aspire to mount high in grace, if they keep in mind that every step they climb they must use the ladder which Jacob saw. The love of God to us is the only way to climb to the love of God.

And now I must spend a minute in putting the truth of my text to the test. I want you not to listen to me so much as to listen to your own hearts, and to God's word, a minute, if you are believers. What is it we have been talking about ? It is God's love to us. Get the thought into your head a minute : " God loves me—not merely bears with me, thinks of me, feeds me, but loves me." Oh, it is a very sweet thing to feel that we have the love of a dear wife, or a kind husband ; and there is much sweetness in the love of a fond child, or a tender mother ; but to think that God loves me, this is infinitely better ! Who is it that loves you ? God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Almighty, All

in all, does he love me? Even he! If all men, and all angels, and all the living creatures that are before the throne loved me, it were nothing to this—the Infinite loves me! And who is it that he loves? *Me.* The text saith, “us.” “We love him because he first loved us.” But this is the personal point --he loves me, an insignificant nobody, full of sin—who deserved to be in hell; who loves him so little in return—God loves *ME.* Beloved believer, does not this melt you? Does not this fire your soul? I know it does if it is really believed. It must. And how did he love me? He loved me so that he gave up his only begotten Son for me, to be nailed to a tree, and made to bleed and die. And what will come of it? Why, because he loved me and forgave me? I am on the way to heaven, and within a few months, perhaps days, I shall see his face and sing his praises. He loved me before I was born; before a star began to shine he loved me, and he has never ceased to do so all these years. When I have sinned he has loved me; when I have forgotten him he has loved me; and when in the days of my sin I cursed him, yet still he loved me; and he will love me when my knees tremble, and my hair is gray with age, “even to hoar hairs” he will bear and carry his servant; and he will love me when the world is on a blaze, and love me forever, and forever. Oh, chew the cud of this blessed thought; roll it under your tongue as a dainty morsel; sit down this afternoon, if you have leisure, and think of nothing but this—his great love wherewith he loves you; and if you do not feel your heart bubbling up with a good matter; if you do not feel your soul yearning towards God, and heaving big with strong emotions of love to God, then I am much mistaken. This is so powerful a truth, and you are so constituted as a Christian as to be wrought upon by this truth, that if it be believed and felt, the consequence must be that you will love him because he first loved you. God bless you, brethren and sisters, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

SERMON XIX.

ALTOGETHER LOVELY.

"YEA, HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY."—Canticles v. 16.

WHEN the old Puritan minister had delivered his discourse, and dwelt upon firstly, and secondly, and thirdly and perhaps upon twenty-fifthly, before he sat down he usually gave a comprehensive summary of all that he had spoken. Every one who carefully noted the summary would carry away the essence of the sermon. The summary was always looked upon by the Puritan hearer as one of the most valuable helps to memory, and consequently a most important part of the discourse. In these five words, the spouse here gives you her summary. She had delivered a tenfold discourse concerning her Lord ; she had described in detail all his various beauties, and when she had surveyed him from head to foot, she gathered up all her commendations in this sentence : "Yea, he is altogether lovely." Remember these words, and know their meaning, and you possess the quintessence of the spouse's portion of the Song of Songs. Now, as in this allegorical song the bride sums up her witness in these words, so may I say that all the patriarchs, all the prophets, all the apostles, all the confessors, yea, and the entire body of the church have left us no other testimony. They all spake of Christ, and they all commended him. Whatever the type, or symbol, or obscure oracle, or open word in which they bore witness, that witness all amounted to this : "Yea, he is altogether love-

ly." Yes, and I will add, that since the canon of inspiration has closed, the testimony of all saints, on earth and in heaven, has continued to confirm the declaration made of old. The verdict of each particular saint and of the whole elect host as a body, still is this, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." From the sighs and the songs which mingle on the dying beds of saints, I hear this note supreme above all others, "He is altogether lovely ;" and from the songs unmingled with groans, which perpetually peal forth from immortal tongues before the presence of the Most High, I hear this one master note, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." If the whole church desired to say with the apostle, "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum," she need not wait for a brief and comprehensive summary, for it lies before her in this golden sentence, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

Looking at my text in this light, I felt much humbling of spirit, and I hesitated to preach upon it, for I said in my heart, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." These deep texts show us the shortness of our plumb-line ; these ocean verses are so exceeding broad that our skiffs are apt to be driven far out of sight of land where our timid spirits tremble to spread the sail. Then I comforted myself by the thought that though I could not comprehend this text in a measure, nor weigh its mountains in scales, or its hills in a balance, yet it was all mine own, by the gift of divine grace, and therefore I need not fear to enter upon the meditation of it. If I cannot grasp the ocean in my span, yet may I bathe therein with sweet content ; if I cannot describe the king in his beauty, yet may I gaze upon him, since the old proverb saith, "A beggar may look at a prince." Though I pretend not so to preach from such a heavenly word as that before us, as to spread before you all its marrow and fatness, yet may I gather up a few crumbs which fall from its table. Poor men are glad of crumbs, and crumbs from such a feast are better than loaves from the tables of the world. Better

to have a glimpse of Jesus, than to see all the glory of the earth all the days of our life. If we fail on this subject we may do better than if we succeeded upon another; so we will pluck up courage, seek divine help, and draw near to this wondrous text, with our shoes from off our feet like Moses when he saw the bush aglow with God.

This verse has been translated in another way: "He is all desires;" and so indeed Jesus is. He was the desire of the ancients, he is the desire of all nations still. To his own people he is their all in all; they are complete in him; they are filled out of his fulness.

"All our capacious powers can wish,
In him doth richly meet."

He is the delight of his servants, and fills their expectations to the full. But we will not dispute about translations, for, after all, with such a text, so full of unutterable spiritual sweetness, every man must be his own translator, and into his own soul must the power of the message come, by the enforcement of the Holy Ghost. Such a text as this is very like the manna which fell in the wilderness, of which the rabbis say it tasted after each man's liking. If the flavor in a man's mouth was very sweetness, the angel's food which fell around the camp was luscious as any dainty he had conceived; whatever he might be, the manna was to him as he was. So shall this text be. To you with low ideas of Christ, the words shall but glide over your ears, and be meaningless; but if your spirit be ravished with the precious love of Jesus, there shall be songs of angels, and more than that, the voice of God's own Spirit to your soul in this short sentence, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

I am an engraver this morning, and I seek somewhat whereon I may engrave this heavenly line. Shall I take unto me ivory or silver? Shall I borrow crystal or gold? These are too common to bear this unique inscription: I put them all aside. Shall I spell my text in gems, with an em-

erald, a sapphire, a ruby, a diamond, or a pearl for each single letter? Nay, these are poor perishable things: we put them all away. I want an immortal spirit to be the tablet for my writing: nay, I must lay aside my graving tool, and ask the Spirit of God to take it: I want a heart prepared of the Holy Ghost, upon whose fleshy tablets there shall be written this morning no other sentence than this, and this shall suffice for a right royal motto to adorn it well: "Yea, he is altogether lovely." Spirit of God, find out the prepared heart, and with thy sacred hand write in eternal characters the love of Christ, and all his inimitable perfections.

In handling our text this morning we shall note three points of character, and then we shall show three uses to which we may profitably turn it.

I. We shall consider THREE POINTS OF CHARACTER which are very noticeable in these words, and the first which suggests itself is this: the words are evidently uttered by one who is under the influence of *overwhelming emotion*. The words are rather a veil to the heart than a glass through which we see its emotions. The sentence labors to express the inexpressible; it pants to utter the unutterable. The person writing these words evidently feels a great deal more than any language can possibly convey to us. The spouse begins somewhat calmly in her description: "My beloved is white and ruddy." She proceeds with due order, commencing at the head, and proceeding with the divers parts of the person of the Beloved; but she warms, she glows, she flames, and at last the heat which had for a while been repressed, is like fire within her bones, and she bursts forth in flaming words. Here is the live coal from off the altar of her heart: "Yea, he is altogether lovely." It is the utterance of a soul that is altogether overcome with admiration, and therefore feels that in attempting to describe the Well-beloved, it has undertaken a task beyond its power. Last

in adoring wonder, the gracious mind desists from description, and cries with rapture, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." It has often been thus with true saints; they have felt the love of Jesus to be overpowering and inebriating. Believers are not always cool and calm in their thoughts towards their Lord: there are seasons with them when they pass into a state of rapture, their hearts burn within them, they are in ecstacy, they mount up with wings as eagles, their souls become like the chariots of Amminadib, they feel what they could not tell, they experience what they could not express, though the tongues of men and of angels were perfectly at their command. Favored believers are altogether enraptured with the sight they have of their all-beauteous Lord. It is to be feared that such raptures are not frequent with all Christians, though I should gravely question his saintship, who has never experienced any degree of holy rapture: but there are some saints to whom a state of overwhelming adoration of their Lord has been by no means an unusual thing. Communion with Jesus has not only entranced them now and then, but it has perfumed all their life with holiness; and if it has not caused their faces literally to shine like the face of Moses, it has made the spiritual glory to flash from their countenances, and elevated them among their fellow Christians to be leaders of the host of God, whereat others have admired and wondered. Peradventure, I speak to children of God who know very little of what I mean by the overwhelming emotions created by a sight of our Lord; they have not so seen the Lord as to have felt their souls melting within them while the Beloved spake with them; to such I shall speak with sorrowful sympathy, being, alas! too much like unto them, but my prayer shall go up all the while, "Lord, reveal thyself to us, that we also may be compelled to say, 'Yea, he is altogether lovely.' Show us thy hands and thy side till we exclaim with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'"

Shall I tell you why it is, my brethren, that many of you

but seldom enjoy the exceeding bliss of Jesus' presence! The cause may lie partly in what is, alas! too common among Christians, *a great degree of ignorance of the person of the Lord Jesus*. Every soul that sees Jesus by faith is saved thereby. If I look to Christ with a bleared eye, that is ever so weak and clouded with tears, and if I only catch a glimpse of him through clouds and mists, yet the sight saves me. But who will remain content with such a poor gleam of his glory as that? Who wishes to see only "through a glass, darkly!" No, let my eyes be cleansed till they become as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, and I can see my Lord as he is seen by his bosom friends, and can sing of those beauties which are the light and the crown of heaven itself. If you do but touch the hem of Jesus' garment, you shall be made whole; but will this always satisfy you? Will you not desire to get beyond the hem and beyond the garment, to himself, and to his heart, and there forever take up your abode? Who desires to be forever a babe in grace, with a half-awakened, dreamy, twilight consciousness of the Redeemer? Brethren, be diligent in the school of the cross; therein is enduring wisdom. Study your Saviour much. The science of Christ crucified is the most excellent of sciences; and to know him and the power of his resurrection, is to know that which is best worth knowing. Ignorance of Jesus deprives many saints of those divine raptures which carry ~~others~~ out of themselves, therefore let us be among those children of Zion who are taught of the Lord.

Next to this, you shall find *the want of meditation* to be a very serious robber of the wealth of renewed hearts. To believe a thing, is, as it were, to see the cool crystal water sparkling in the cup; but to meditate upon it is to drink thereof. Reading gathers the clusters, contemplation squeezes forth their generous juice. Meditation is of all things the most soul-fattening when combined with prayer. The spouse had meditated much in this chapter, for otherwise she had not been able to speak in detail concerning her Lord. O

saintly hearts, imitate ye her example ! Think, my brethren, of our Lord Jesus: he is God, the Eternal, the Infinite, the ever—blessed ; yet he became man for us—man of the substance of his mother, like ourselves. Meditate upon his spotless character ; review the sufferings which he endured on Calvary ; follow him into the grave, and from the grave to the resurrection, and from the resurrection up the starry way to his triumphant throne. Let your souls dwell upon each of his offices, as prophet, priest, and king ; pore over each one of his characters, and every scriptural title ; pause and consider every phase of him, and when you have done this, begin again, and yet again. It is good to chew the cud by meditation, then shall the sweetness and fatness of divine truth come to your soul, and you shall burst forth with such rapturous expressions as that of the text, “ Yea, he is altogether lovely.” The most of you are too busy, you have too much to do in the world ; but what is it all about ? Scraping together dust, loading yourselves with thick clay. Oh that you were busy after the true riches, and could step aside awhile to enrich yourselves in solitude, and make your hearts vigorous by feeding upon the person and work of your ever—blessed Lord ! You miss a heaven below by a too eager pursuit of earth. You cannot know these joyful raptures if meditation be pushed into a corner.

Another reason why little of the Lord’s beauty is discerned, is *the low state of the spiritual life in many a Christian*. Many a believer is just alive and no more. Do you not know such starveling souls ? May you not be one yourself ! His eyes are not delighted with the beauties of Christ, he is purblind, and cannot see afar off ; he walks not with Jesus in the garden of pomegranates, he is too feeble to rise from the couch of weakness ; he cannot feed upon Christ, his appetite is gone—sure sign of terrible decline. For him there are no climbings to the top of Amana, no leaping for joy in the temple, no dancing before the ark with David ; no, if he be but carried to the feet of Jesus in an am-

bulance as a sick man borne of four, it is as much as he has yet received. To be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, to have the wings of eagles with which to mount above the clouds of earth, to this many are strangers. But beloved, there are noble spirits and better taught, who know something of the life of heaven even while here below. The Lord strengthen us with grace in our inner man, and then shall we drink deeper draughts of the wines on the lees well refined, and then also our eyes being open, we shall see Jesus more clearly, and bear fuller witness that he is "fairer than the children of men."

I am afraid that *the visits of Christ to our souls have been disesteemed, and the loss of those visits has not caused us corresponding sorrow.* We did not sufficiently delight in the beauty of the Bridegroom when he did come to us; when our hearts were somewhat lifted up with his love we grew cold and idle, and then he withdrew his conscious presence; but, alas! we were not grieved, but we wickedly tried to live without him. It is wretched work for a believer to try and live without his Saviour. Perhaps, dear brethren, some of you have tried it until at last you have almost succeeded. You were wont to mourn like doves if you had no word from your Master in the morning! and, without a love-token before you went to rest, you tossed uneasily upon your bed; but now you are carnal, and worldly, and careless, and quite content to have it so. Jesus hides his face, the sun is set, and yet it is not night with you. Oh, may God be pleased to arouse you from this lethargy, and make you mourn your sad estate! Even if an affliction should be needed to bring you back from your backsliding it would be a cheap price to pay. Awake, O north wind, with all thy cutting force, if thy bleak breath may but stir the lethargic heart! May the Lord grant us grace so to love Christ that if we have not our fill of him, we may be ready to die with hungering and thirsting after him. May we never be able to find a place to build our nest upon

while our wing wanders away from the tree of life. Like the dove of Noah, may we drop into the water and be drowned sooner than find rest for the sole of our foot except upon the ark, Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

Beloved, if none of these suggestions should hit the mark, and reveal the cause why so little is known of rapturous love to Christ, let me suggest another. Very often, *professors' hearts are vain and frivolous*; they are taken up during the week with their business. This might plead some excuse; but when they have little spaces and intervals, these are filled up with very vanity. Now, if the soul has come to look at the mere trifles of this world as all-important, is it any marvel that it should be unable to perceive the exceeding preciousness of Christ Jesus? Who will care for the wheat when he dotes on the chaff? And with this it will often happen that the professor's mind has grown proud as well as vain; he does not remember his natural poverty and meanness, and consequently does not value the riches of Christ Jesus. He has come to think himself an established, experienced Christian; he fancies that he is not like those foolish beginners who are so volatile and so readily led astray; he has acquired the wisdom of years and the stability of experience. O soul, if thou art great, Christ will be little; thou canst never see him on the throne until thou hast been on the dunghill thyself. If thou be any thing, so much the less is Christ; for if he be all in all, then there is no room for any thing else; and if thou be something, thou hast stolen just so much from the glory of thy Lord Jesus. Lie low in the dust, it is the place for thee.

“The more thy glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”

The humbler I am in myself, the more shall I be capable of seeing the enchanting beauties of Christ.

Let me just say these two or three words. I believe those are the happiest saints who are most overwhelmed with a sense of the greatness, goodness, and preciousness of

Christ. I believe these to be the most useful saints, also, and to be in the Christian church as a tower of strength. I pray that you and I, walking with God by faith, may nevertheless often have our festival days, our notable seasons, when he shall specially kiss us with the kisses of his love, and we shall drink larger draughts of his love, which is better than wine. Oh ! to be carried right away with the divine manifestation of the chief among ten thousand, so that our souls shall cry out in rapture, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." This is one characteristic of the text : may it be transferred to us.

2. A second is this, and very manifest it is upon the surface of the verse—here is *undivided affection*. "He is altogether lovely." Note that these words have a world of meaning in them, but chiefly they tell us this, that Jesus is to the true saint the only lovely one in the world. "He is altogether lovely ;" then there is no loveliness anywhere else. It is as though the spouse felt that Christ had engrossed all the beauty and all the loveworthiness in the entire universe. Who among us will say that she erred ? Is not Jesus worthy of all the admiration and love of all intelligent beings ? But may we not love our friends and kinsfolk ? Ay, but in him, and in subservience to him ; so, and so only, is it safe to love them. Did not our Lord himself say, "If any man love father or mother more than me, he is not worthy of me" ? Yea, and in another place he put it more strongly still, for he said, "Except a man hate father and mother," or love them not at all in comparison with me, "he is not worthy of me." Except these are put on a lower stage than Jesus is we cannot be his disciples. Christ must be monarch in the breast ; our dear ones may sit at his footstool, and we may love them for his sake, but he alone must fill the throne of our hearts. I may see excellences in my Christian brethren, but I must not forget that there would be none in them if they were not derived from him ; their loveliness is only a part of his loveliness,

for he wrote it in them by his own Spirit. I am to acknowledge that Jesus is the monopolizer of all loveliness, the engrosser of all that is admirable in the entire universe; and I am, therefore, to give him all my love, for "he is altogether lovely."

Our text means, again, that in Jesus loveliness of all kinds is to be found. If there be any thing that is worthy of the love of an immortal spirit, it is to be seen in abundance in the Lord Jesus. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of a good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," all can be found without measure in Christ Jesus. As all the rivers meet in the sea, so all beauties unite in the Redeemer. Take the character of any gracious man, and you shall find a measure of loveliness, but it has its bounds and its mixtures. Peter has many virtues, but he has not a few failings. John, too, excels, but in certain points he is deficient; but herein our Lord transcends all his saints! for all human virtues, all divine, are harmoniously blended in him. He is not this flower or that, but he is the Paradise of perfection. He is not a star here or a constellation there, he is the whole heaven of stars, nay, he is the heaven of heavens; he is all that is fair and lovely condensed in one.

When the text says again that Jesus "is altogether lovely," it declares that he is lovely in all views of him. It generally happens that to the noblest building there is an unhappy point of view from which the architecture appears at a disadvantage; the choicest piece of workmanship may not be equally complete in all directions; the best human character is deformed by one flaw, if not with more; but with our Lord all is lovely, regard him as you will. You shall contemplate him from all points, and only find new confirmation of the statement that "he is altogether lovely." As the everlasting God before the world was made, angels

loved him and adored ; as the babe at Bethlehem or as the man at Bethany ; as walking the sea or as nailed to the cross ; in his grave, dead, and buried, or on his throne triumphant ; rising as forerunner, or descending a second time to judge the world in righteousness ; in his shame, despised and spit upon, or in his glory, adored and beloved ; with the thorns about his brow and the nails piercing his hands, or with the keys of death and hell swinging at his girdle ; view him as you will, and where you will, and when you will, "he is altogether lovely." Under all aspects, and in all offices and in relations, at all times and all seasons, under all circumstances and conditions, anywhere, everywhere, "he is altogether lovely."

Nor is he in any degree unlovely ; the commendation forbids the idea ; if he be "altogether lovely," where could you find room for deformity ? When Apelles painted Alexander, he laid the monarch's finger on an unsightly scar ; but there are no scars to conceal when you portray the countenance of Immanuel. We say of our country—and who among us will not say it ?—"With all her faults we love her still ;" but we love Jesus, and find no strain put upon our heart, for trace of fault he has none. There is no need of apologies for Jesus, no excuses are required for him. But what is that I see upon his shoulder ? It is a hard, rough cross ; and if I follow him I must carry that cross for his sake. Is not that cross unsightly ? Oh, no ! he is altogether lovely, cross and all. Whatever it may involve to be a Christian, we count even the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The world will honor a half Christ, but a whole Christ it will not acknowledge. The bat's-eyed Socinian saith, "I admire the man Christ, but I will not adore Jesus the God." To him the eternal Word is but half lovely, if lovely at all. Some will have Christ the exemplar, but they will not accept him as the vicarious sacrifice for sin, the substitute for sinners. Many will have Christ in silver slippers—my lord arch-bishop's

religion—but they would not listen to the gospel from a poor gracious Methodist, or think it worth their while to join the unlettered throng whose devout songs rise from the village green. Alas! how much we see of crosses of gold and ivory, but how little do men love the lowly cross of Jesus! Brethren, we think Jesus “altogether lovely” even in poverty, or when hanging naked on the cross, deserted and condemned. We see unspeakable beauty in Jesus in the grave, all fair with the pallor of death. Jesus bruised as to his heel by the old serpent is yet comely. His love to us makes him evermore “white and ruddy” to our eye. We adore him anywhere and everywhere, and in any place, for we know that this same Christ whose heel is bruised breaks also the serpent’s head, and he who was naked for our sakes, is now arrayed in glory. We know that the despised and rejected is also Kings of kings, and Lord of lords, the “Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” There are no flaws in him.

The text intends us to know that Jesus is lovely in the highest degree: not lovely positively and then failing comparatively, but lovely superlatively, in the highest possible sense. But I leave this for your hearts to enlarge upon. I will close this point by saying, every child of God acknowledges that Christ Jesus is lovely altogether to the whole of himself. He is lovely to my judgment; but many things are so, and yet are not lovely to my affections; I know them to be right, and yet they are not pleasant: but Jesus is as lovely to my heart as to my head, as dear as he is good. He is lovely to my hopes: are they not all in him? Is not this my expectation—to see him as he is? But he is lovely to my memory too: did he not pluck me out of the net? Lovely to all my powers and all my passions, my faculties and feelings. As David puts it, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God”—the whole of the man seeking after the whole of the Saviour; the whole Saviour sweet

and inexpressibly precious to the man's entire being. May it be so with you and with me. But is it so? Do you not set up idols in your hearts? Men of God, do you not need to take the scourge of small cords, and purge the temple of your souls this morning? Are there not buyers and sellers where Christ alone ought to be? Oh, to love him wholly, and to love him only, so that we have no eyes for other beauty, no heart for other loveliness, since he fills our souls, and is to us "altogether lovely."

3. The third characteristic of the text is that to which I desire to draw the most attention, and that is, *ardent devotion*. I called the text a live coal from off the altar, and surely it is so. If it should drop into our hearts to set them on a blaze, it would be an unspeakable mercy. Ardent devotion flames from this sentence. It is the language of one who feels that no emotion is too deep when Jesus moves the heart. Do any chide you and say you think too much of your religion? It cannot be, it cannot be. If the zeal of God's house should eat us up until we had no existence except for the Lord's glory, we should not have gone too far. If there be corresponding knowledge to balance it, there cannot be too much of zeal for God. The utterance is that of one whose heart is like a furnace, of which love is the fire. "He is altogether lovely"—it is the exclamation of one who feels that no language is too strong to commend the Lord. The spouse looked through the Hebrew tongue to find an intense expression, and our translators ransacked the English language for a forcible word, and they have put it in the most weighty way—"He is altogether lovely." There is no fear of exaggeration when you speak of Christ; hyperboles are only sober truth when we depict his excellences. We have heard of a portrait-painter who owed his popularity to the fact that he never painted truthfully, but always gave a flattering touch or two; here is one who would defy his art, for it is impossible to flatter Jesus. Lay on, ye men of eloquence, spare no colors, ye shall never depict him too

bravely. Bring forth your harps, ye seraphs; sing aloud, ye blood-washed ones; all your praises fall short of the glory which is due to him.

It is the language of one who feels that no service would be too great to render to the Lord. I wish we felt as the apostles and martyrs and holy men of old did, that Jesus Christ ought to be served at the highest and richest rate. We do little, very little: what if I had said we do next to nothing for our dear Lord and Master nowadays? The love of Christ doth not constrain us as it should. But those of old bore poverty and dared reproach, marched weary leagues, passed tempestuous seas, bore perils of robbers and of cruel men, to plant the cross in lands where as yet Jesus was not known; labors that nowadays could not be expected of men, were performed as daily matters of commonplace by the Christians of the earliest times. Is Christ less lovely, or is his church less loyal? Would God she estimated him at his right rate, for then she would return to her former mode of service. Brethren, we want to feel, and we shall feel if this text is deeply engraven on our hearts, that no gift is too great for Christ, though we give him all we have and consecrate to him all our time and ability, and sacrifice our very lives to him. No suffering is too great to bear for the sake of the Crucified, and it is a great joy to be reproached for Christ's sake. "He is altogether lovely." Then, my soul, I charge thee think nothing hard to which he calls thee, nothing sharp which he bids thee endure. As the knight of the olden time consecrated himself to the Crusade, and wore the red cross on his arm, fearing not to meet death at the hands of the Infidel, if he might be thought a soldier of the Lord, so we too would face all foes for Jesus' sake. We want, only refined and purified, and delivered from its earthly grossness, we want the chivalrous spirit once again in the church of God. A new crusade fain would I preach: had I the tongue of such a one as the old hermit to move all Christendom, I would say, "This day

Christ, the altogether—lovely One, is dishonored : can ye endure it ? This day idols stand where he should be, and men adore them ; lovers of Jesus, can ye brook it ? This day Juggernaut rides through the streets on his bloody way, this day God's Christ is still unknown to millions, and the precious blood cleanses not the nations, how long will ye have it so ? We, in England, with ten thousand Christian hearts, and as many tongues endowed with eloquence, and purses weighted with gold, shall we refuse our gifts, withhold our witness, and suffer the Lord to be dishonored ? The church is doing next to nothing for her great Lord, she falls short both of her duty and of the grim need of a perishing world. Oh for a flash of the celestial fire ! Oh, when shall the Spirit's energy visit us again ! When shall men put down their selfishness and seek only Christ ? When shall they leave their strifes about trifles to rally round his cross ? When shall we end the glorification of ourselves, and begin to make him glorious, even to the world's end ? God help us in this matter, and kindle in our hearts the old consuming, heart-inflaming fire, which shall make men see that Jesus is all in all to us.

II. Thus I have shown you the characteristics of the text, and now I desire to USE IT IN THREE WAYS FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES. As time flies, we must use it briefly.

The first word is to you, Christians. Here is very *sweet instruction*. The Lord Jesus "is altogether lovely." Then if I want to be lovely, I must be like him, and the model for me as a Christian is Christ. Have you ever noticed how badly boys write at the bottom of the pages in their copy-books ? There is the copy at the top ; and in the first line they look at that ; in the second line, they copy their own imitation ; in the third line, they copy their imitation of their imitation, and so the writing grows worse and worse as it descends the page. Now, the apostles followed Christ ; the first fathers imitated the apostles ; the next fathers cop-

ied the first fathers, and so the standard of holiness fell dreadfully; and now we are too apt to follow the very lees and dregs of Christianity, and we think if we are about as good as our poor, imperfect ministers or leaders in the church, that we shall do well and deserve praise. But now, my brethren, cover up the mere copies and imitations, and live by the first line. Copy Jesus; "he is altogether lovely;" and if you can write by the first line, you will write by the truest and best model in the world. We want to have Christ's zeal, but we must balance it with his prudence and discretion; we must seek to have Christ's love to God, and we must feel his love to men, his forgiveness of injury, his gentleness of speech, his incorruptible truthfulness, his meekness and lowliness, his utter unselfishness, his entire consecration to his Father's business. Oh that we had all this, for depend upon it whatever other pattern we select, we have made a mistake; we are not following the true classic model of the Christian artist. Our master model is the "altogether lovely" one. How sweet it is to think of our Lord in the double aspect as our exemplar and our Saviour! The laver which stood in the temple was made of brass: in this the priests washed their feet whenever they offered sacrifices; so does Christ purify us from sin; but the tradition is that this laver was made of very bright brass, and acted as a mirror, so that as often as the priests came to it they could see their own spots in it. Oh, when I come to my Lord Jesus, not only do I get rid of my sins as to their guilt, but I see my spots in the light of his perfect character, and I am humbled and taught to follow after holiness.

The second use to which we would put the verse is this, here is a very *gentle rebuke* to some of you. Though very gentle, I beseech you to let it sink deep into your hearts. You do not see the loveliness of Christ, yet "he is altogether lovely." Now, I will not say one hard word, but I will tell you sorrowfully what pitiable creatures you are. I hear enchanting music, which seems more a thing of heaven than

of earth: it is one of Handel's half-inspired oratorios. Yonder sits a man, who says, "I hear nothing to commend." He has not the power to perceive the linked sweetnesses, the delicious harmonies of sounds. Do you blame him? No, but you who have an ear for music, say, "How I pity him: he misses half the joy of life!" Here, again, is a glorious landscape, hills and valleys, and flowing rivers, expansive lakes and undulating meadows. I bring to the point of view a friend, whom I would gratify, and I say to him, "is not that a charming scene?" Turning his head to me, he says, "I see nothing." I perceive that he cannot enjoy what is so delightful to me: he has some little sight, but he sees only what is very near, and he is blind to all beyond. Now, do I blame him? Or if he proceed to argue with me, and say, "You are very foolish to be so enthusiastic about a non-existent landscape, it is merely your excitement," shall I argue with him? Shall I be angry with him? No, but I shall shed a tear, and whisper to myself, "Great are the tosses of the blind." Now, you who have never heard music in the name of Jesus, you are to be greatly pitied, for your loss is heavy. You who never saw beauty in Jesus, and who never will forever, you need all our tears. It is hell enough not to love Christ! It is the lowest abyss of Tartarus, and its fiercest flame, not to be enamored of the Christ of God. There is no heaven that is more heaven than to love Christ and to be like him, and there is no hell that is more hell than to be unlike Christ and not to want to be like him, but even to be averse to the infinite perfections of the "altogether lovely." The Lord open those blind eyes of yours, and unstop those deaf ears, and give you the new and spiritual life, and then you will join in saying, "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

The last use of the text is, that of *tender attractiveness*. "Yea, he is altogether lovely." Where are you this morning, you who are convinced of sin and want a Saviour, where have you crept to? Are you hidden away where my eyes

cannot reach you? At any rate, let this sweet thought reach you. You need not be afraid to come to Jesus, for "he is altogether lovely." It does not say he is altogether terrible—that is your misconception of him; it does not say he is somewhat lovely, and sometimes willing to receive a certain sort of a sinner; but "he is altogether lovely," and therefore he is always ready to welcome to himself the vilest of the vile. Think of his name. It is Jesus, the Saviour. Is not that lovely? Think of his work. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. This is his occupation. Is not that lovely? Think of what he has done. He hath redeemed our souls with blood. Is not that lovely? Think of what he is doing. He is pleading before the throne of God for sinners. Think of what he is giving at this moment—he is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Is not this lovely? Under every aspect Christ Jesus is attractive to sinners who need him. Come, then, come and welcome, there is nothing to keep you away, there is every thing to bid you come. May this very Sabbath day in which I have preached Christ, and lifted him up, be the day in which you shall be drawn to him, never again to leave him, but to be his forever and forever. Amen.

SERMON XX.

THE ALARUM.

"I MYSELF WILL AWAKE EARLY."—Psalm lvi. 8.

THE proper subject to treat upon with such a text as this would be the propriety and excellence of early rising, especially when we are desirous of praising or serving God. The dew of dawn should be consecrated to devotion. The text is a very remarkable expression, and might fitly be made the early-riser's motto. It is, in the original, a highly poetical phrase, and Milton and others have borrowed or imitated it. "I will awaken the morning." So early would the psalmist arise for the praise of God, that he would call up the day, and bid the sun arise from the chambers of the east, and proceed upon his journey. "I will awaken the morning." Early rising has the example of Old Testament saints to recommend it, and many modern saints having conscientiously practised it, have been loud in its praise. It is an economy of time, and an assistance to health, and thus it doubly lengthens life. Late rising is too often the token of indolence, and the cause of disorder throughout the whole day. Be assured that the best hours are the first. Our city habits are to be deplored, because by late hours of retirement at night we find early rising difficult if not impossible. If we are able to escape the shackles of custom, and secure for devotion and contemplation the hour when the dew is on the grass, we may count ourselves thrice happy. If we cannot do all we would in this matter, at least let us do all we can.

That is not, however, the topic upon which I now desire to speak to you. I come at this time, not so much to plead

for the *early* as for the *awakening*. The hour we may speak of at another time—the fact is our subject now. It is bad to awake late, but what shall be said of those who never awake at all? Better late than never : but with many it is to be feared it will be never. I would take down the trumpet and give a blast, or ring the alarm-bell till all the faculties of the sluggard's manhood are made to bestir themselves, and he cries with new-born determination, "I myself will awake."

"*Will awake.*" This is a world in which most men nowadays are alive to their temporal interests. If in these pushing times any man goes to his business in a sleepy, listless fashion, he very soon finds himself on an ebb-tide, and all his affairs aground. The wide-awake man seizes opportunities or makes them, and thus those who are widest awake usually come to the front. Years ago affairs moved like the broad-wheel wagon, very sleepily, with sober pause and leisurely progression, and then the son of the snail had a chance ; but now, when we almost fly, if a man would succeed in trade he must be all alive, and all awake. If it be so in temporals, it is equally so in spirituals, for the world, the flesh, and the devil are all awake to compete with us ; and there is no resolution that I would more earnestly commend to each one of the people of God than this one ; "I will awake ; I will awake at once ; I will awake early, and I will pray to God that I may be kept awake, that my Christian existence may not be dreamy, but that I may be to the fullest degree useful in my Master's service." If this were the resolve of each, what a change would come over the Christian church ! I long to see the diligence of the shop exceeded by the closet, and the zeal of the market excelled by the church. Each Christian is alive : but is he also awake ? He has eyes, but are they open ? He has lofty possibilities of blessing his fellow men, but does he exercise them ? My heart's desire is that none of us may feel the dreamy influence of this age, which is comparable to the enchanted ground ; but that

each of us may be watchful, wakeful, vigorous, intense, fervent. Trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless our meditations to our spiritual quickening, we shall briefly turn our thoughts to the consideration of two or three things.

I. Our text is connected with the duty of praise, and therefore our first point shall be—IT IS MOST NECESSARY THAT OUR MINDS SHOULD BE IN A STATE OF WAKEFULNESS WHEN WE ARE PRAISING GOD. Therefore, as we ought to be always praising him our mind ought always to be wakeful. It is a shame to pray with the mind half asleep : it is an equal shame to attempt to praise God till all the powers of the mind are thoroughly aroused. David is herein a most fit example, for he sings, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp ; I myself will awake early.”

We should be fully awake when engaged in *private* thanksgiving ; the song of our solitude should be full of living joy. I am afraid there is very little private singing nowadays. We often hear discourses concerning private prayer, but very seldom of private praise ; and yet ought there not to be as much private praise as private prayer ? I fear from the seldomness of its being mentioned, that private thanksgiving has grown to be a sleepy affair. Then as to *public* worship, how earnest ought it to be ! Yet how seldom is it hearty and real ! How often do we hear half-awake singing ! Sometimes a sort of musical-box, consisting of pipes, keys, and bellows, is set to do all the adoration. The heathen of Thibet turn the wind to account religiously, by making it turn their windmills and pray for them ; and our brethren in England, by an ingenious adjustment of pipes, make the same motive power perform their praise. Where this machinery is not adopted, still the Lord is robbed of his praise by other methods. Sometimes half a dozen skilled voices of persons who would be equally as much at home at the opera or the theatre as in the house of God, are form

ed into a choir to perform the psalmody ; and it is supposed that God accepts their formal notes as the praise of the entire assembly. How far different is the genuine song of gracious men who lift up their voices to the Lord because their hearts adore him ! Oh, I love to hear every voice pouring out its note, especially if I can but hope that with every voice there is going forth a fervent heart. This warm-hearted, joyful singing—why, it makes the congregation on earth to be like the assembly of the skies ; and causes the meeting-place of the saints to be a faint type of the gathering of the angels and glorified spirits before the throne of God. To drone or to whisper in such a delightful exercise is criminal. If ever we should exhibit the angel's wakefulness, it should be when we are emulating their employment.

Our praise ought to be performed with a fully-awakened mind: first, *that we may recollect what we are praising God for.* We should have a vivid sense of the mercies we have received, or we cannot bless God aright for them. You who have not yet received spiritual blessings, should not be forgetful of his temporal mercies : it is surely sufficient cause for lively thanksgiving that you are not upon a bed of sickness ; that you are not in the lunatic asylum ; that you are not in the workhouse ; that you are not on the borders of the grave ; that you are not in hell ; that you still have food and raiment, and that you are where the gospel is graciously presented to you. Should not all this be thought of ? Should not this be fuel for the flame of gratitude ? As for us who have tasted spiritual blessings, if our minds were awake, we should think of eternal love and its goings forth from eternity ; of redeeming love, and the streams that flow from the fount of Calvary ; of God's immutable love, and his patience with our ill-manners in the wilderness ; of covenant mercy, of mercies yet to come, of heaven, and the bliss hereafter. Such recollections should call up our whole man to praise the Lord. If the innumerable benefits which we receive were thought of and dwelt upon, the contempla-

tion would put a force, a volume, a body into our song, and make it far more the flaming, ethereal thing which it ought to be.

We want our souls awakened, next, *so that we may remember to whom our praise is offered.* Before no man king do we bow the knee of homage. To praise God is to stand in the immediate presence of the blessed and only Potentate. Do not even seraphs veil their faces in that august presence? With what lowliness ought we to bow! With what earnestness of spirit should we praise! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Courtiers are not expected to nod with drowsiness in the presence of their king: and if they came to present thanksgiving, it would seem strange if they were to yawn as men half asleep. Surely, it would be hypocritical congratulation and insulting behaviour if they should be detected in a sleepy condition! If we come together to praise God, let us really do it. If we cannot praise him, let us know and mourn that we cannot do it, and let us be sure that the spirit is willing, even if the flesh be weak. Let all sleepiness be put away in the presence of the ever-wakeful Jehovah, before whose eyes all things are naked and open. He never slumbereth nor sleepeth, so as to make a pause in his mercy to us: let not our slumbering spirits cause an omission of our grateful song.

We need that we should be awake in praise, *that our whole hearts may be thoroughly warm in the exercise.* Under Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, the acceptableness of our praise depends very much upon the warmth of it. As cold prayers virtually ask God to deny them, so cold praises ask God to reject them. Cold praises are a sort of semi-blasphemy: they do, as it were, say, "Thou art not worthy to be ardently praised. O God, we bring thee these poor thanksgivings: they are good enough for thee." Surely if we treated our heavenly Father as we should, every sacred passion would glow in our hearts like a furnace: our

whole heart would catch fire, and as Elijah went up to heaven with horses of fire and chariots of fire, so, too, our soul, as we thought upon the goodness and the graciousness of God, would ascend to heaven in vehement joy of adoration. Our praises would not be like the incense in the censer, sweet but cold ; but coals of fire would be put in with the incense, and then, like a holy cloud of smoke, our gratitude would ascend to heaven. Mark with what exhilaration the psalmist rendered praise unto God, and imitate him therein. See him dancing before the ark, and hear him cry aloud, "Sing praises to God, sing praises : sing praises unto our King, sing praises."

Brethren, we have need to wake up our souls in praise, *or else we shall at times fail altogether in the duty.* Only the wakeful are praiseful. Sleeping birds sing not. The very best praises God receives from earth are from his troubled saints ; but then they are awake ; the strokes of the rod have aroused them. When the three holy children sung in the fire, their song was sweet indeed ; yet had they not been thoroughly in earnest, they had poured forth no holy hymn. When martyrs have magnified God standing on the burning fagot, they have given God better praise than even the angels can. It was the old fable, that the nightingale was made to sing by the thorn that pricked her breast : and many a child of God has poured forth his sweetest music when the thorn of affliction has pierced his heart. Wake up your souls—you that are desponding, you that are depressed, you that have a dead child at home, you that are expecting soon to go to the grave with those you love, you that have been losing your property, you that are pinched with poverty—wake up your souls to praise God still, for unless well awake you will forget to extol him. Remember what Job did. When he sat on the dunghill, scraping himself with a bit of broken pot, yet he praised God, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." It was grand of thee, O patriarch of

Uz, to be able thus to extol thy Lord : then was thy soul fully awake. Beloved friends, may our inmost souls be so energetic with the power of grace that we may spontaneously and earnestly bless the Lord at all times and under all circumstances.

Do you believe, my brethren, that amongst all the throng of those who see Jehovah face to face, there is one dull, cold, careless worshipper? Look through the seraphim and cherubim: they are all flaming ones, burning with intense desire and fervent adoration. Look through the hosts of angels: they are all his ministers that do his pleasure, and bless him while they do it. Search through all those sanctified and glorified bands of spirits, and you shall not find one with half-closed eye wearily praising his Maker. Heaven consists in *joyful* praise. Look at the very birds on earth, how they shame us! Dear little creatures, if you watch them when they are singing, you will sometimes wonder how so much sound can come out of such diminutive bodies. How they throw their whole selves into the music, and seem to melt themselves away in song! How the wing vibrates, the throat pulsates, and every part of their body rejoices to assist the strain! This is the way in which we ought to praise God. If birds that are sold at three for two farthings yet render God such praise, how much more heartily ought we to sing before him? Let it be a resolution with us at this hour that we will praise God more; that we will sing to him more at home, about our business, and in all proper places; and that whenever we do sing we will do it heartily, waking up our tongue and all the powers of our mind and body to bless and praise the name of God.

II. Now, secondly, we shall notice that WAKEFULNESS IS A GREAT NEED IN THE ENTIRE SPIRITUAL LIFE. I believe it to be one of the great wants of the church now. I question whether most of us are awake spiritually. I question whether I am. I wish to be awakened far more to a sensi-

bility of the power of the world to come, and a tenderness in regard to spiritual truth. Slumber is so natural to us. "Well," says one, "but we *talk* about the things of God." Yes, but people talk when they are asleep, and a good deal of Christian conversation is very much like the talk of sleepers. There is not the force in it—the life in it, that there would be in conversation if we were really awakened to feel the power of eternal verities. "Yet," says one, "I hope we *act* consistently." I trust you do, but there are many people who walk in their sleep, and, alas! I know some Christian professors who appear to be trying very hazardous feats of sleep-walking just now. Some somnambulists have been able to walk on places where, had they been awake, they never would have been able to endure the dizzy height; and I see some Christians, if indeed they be Christians, running awful risks which I think they would never venture upon unless they had fallen into the deep sleep of carnal security. Speak of a man slumbering at the mast-head, it is nothing to a professor of religion at ease while covetousness is his master, or worldly company his delight. If professors were awake, they would see their danger, and avoid sinful amusements and ungodly associations, as men fly from fire-eating tigers or deadly cobras. "Well, but we are doing much good and useful work," says one; "teaching in Sabbath-schools, distributing religious tracts, or laboring in some other form of service; we are spending our time in commendable engagements." I am glad to hear it; but people can do a great deal in their sleep. We have heard many strange instances of how habit at last has enabled persons to pursue their callings, to answer signals, and keep up all the appearance of industry, and yet they have been at the time asleep. Oh, it is a very shocking thing that so many of our churches in England are in a deep sleep! Dissenting churches I know best about, and there are many where the minister preaches in his sleep, where the people sing in their sleep,

where prayer is offered in sleep, and even the communion is celebrated amid a profound spiritual slumber. Have you never been at a prayer-meeting where half, if not all, both of those who prayed vocally and those who listened, were in a lethargy as rigid as death? Talk of sleeping women who have been in a swoon by the month together, the wonder may be a lying one in the natural world, but in the spiritual world it is as common as daisies in the meadows. Adam slept soundly when the taking away of his rib did not wake him, but what shall we say of those who startle not though they are losing all the strength and glory of their souls? Alas! for some congregations, it is long since they had a revival, they have lost the very idea of vigorous piety and vital energy. All the week round they are all asleep, and if a real, earnest, living, stirring sermon were preached among them, it would be almost as if the King of Prussia's Krupp guns had dropped a live shell into their midst. I wish a spiritual live shell could fall into some congregations, and burst among them, killing their conventionality, and wounding their self-satisfaction with a deadly wound. Men may attend to outward worship with unimpeachable decorum and correctness, and yet there may be no wakefulness in it, and consequently no acceptableness with God Most High.

Come, brethren and sisters, we must wake up, even if we have been asleep ourselves, and we must do so because *we are in an enemy's country*; it will not do to sleep here. This side of heaven we are in every place and at all hours surrounded by foes. What did the Master say? "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Be like sentries at your post, for otherwise the enemy will soon betray you. Will you not grieve the Holy Spirit if you are lethargic? Will you not dishonor your Master if you fall asleep? Remember, also, that the devil seeks your destruction, and can never do you so much mischief awake as he can if he finds you sleeping. Let the growling of the old lion arouse

you. If nothing else will bestir you, remember the fiery darts of the wicked one. Saul would not have lain so quiet if he had known that Abishai was holding the spear over him, and longing to pin him to the earth : yet this is the condition of professors who are given to slumber. Samson would have scarcely slept on Delilah's lap if he had foreseen that his hair would be cut, and his eyes put out by the Philistines. Up, then, ye drowsy professors, for the Philistines are upon you !

Moreover, brethren, *slumber impoverishes us*. The slug-gard, and the thistle and thorn, always go together, and rags and poverty follow close behind. You may miss by your sleep great spiritual profit. You cannot expect sleepy Christians to grow in grace. They will miss many instructive things in God's word, many precious promises meant only for the wakeful. They will lose high enjoyments and spiritual banquetings, for the king's entertainments are not for those who fold their arms, and toss upon the bed of indolence. Wealth lies in the field of the wakeful, but the lover of ease shall have want come upon him as an armed man. I blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, for it is high time to awake out of sleep.

Awaken too, my brother, for you are *losing opportunities for usefulness*. While you sleep men are dying. See how the cemeteries are becoming crowded, how the area of them has to be enlarged. Day by day you see wending through the streets the funeral procession : men gone beyond the reach of your instructions and your warnings are carried to their long homes. Awake then, awake, for death is busy everywhere. Meanwhile, those who do not die before you, may be removed beyond the sphere of your usefulness ; they go at least where you cannot reach them, where, perhaps, no one ever will, and their blood may lie upon your head, and that forever. Awake, for perhaps while you are asleep another heart that is now ac-

cessible to the gospel may become finally hardened. Conscience will soon become seared, and then there is nothing for zeal and earnestness to work upon. It will be too late for you to put the seal upon the wax when once it is cool. Quick, sir ; while the wax is soft put the seal down ! How many opportunities for good we all miss ! But those who are asleep lose all their opportunities, and they will be surely required of them when the Master comes.

Awake ! I pray you, because *you will insensibly lose the power, the joy of your spiritual life*. Communion with God will become more and more scarce with you as you become more sleepy. Awake, lest you backslide, lest you fall by little and little ; lest after all you become apostate, and prove yourself not to be a child of God. Awake, for your power with others will certainly depart from you as your wakefulness departs. A sleepy preacher never wins the souls of men. A dull, formal servant of God is of little or no use in the church of God. I think I said years ago, "Give me half a dozen thorough red-hot Christians, and I will do more, by God's grace, with them, than with half a dozen hundred of ordinary professors." I am sure it is so. Crowds of professors are past all cure. I would as soon hunt with dead dogs, as try to work with them. They cannot be trained into heroes : they are dolts both by nature and by practice : much slothfulness has drained out their soul's life. The most you can hope for them is that they will remain decently Christianized, so as not altogether to disgrace us. But, oh, for thoroughly wide-awake men, men who feel the life of God in their souls, and are, therefore, more than ordinarily earnest. Band together half a dozen such, and the Holy Spirit being with them, they will make all London feel their presence before long. Oh, may God awaken all of us, for our spiritual life absolutely requires it.

III. Thirdly, I am going to mention CERTAIN WAYS OF KEEPING YOURSELVES AWAKE. "How can I be kept awake?"

says one. Answer, first, *make it a matter of prayer* with the Lord to awaken you. No one can give you spiritual power and watchfulness but the Spirit of God. "All my fresh springs are in thee." Where life first comes from, there more life must be obtained. Christ has come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. He who first called us from the dead must also arouse us from among the slumbering. He who brought us from the grave of our depravity must bring us from the couch of our indolence. Pray about the matter; make it a point with God: ask him to arouse you. On your knees is the posture in which to conquer sloth.

Next, *means are to be used*. We are not to leave the matter with God, and think there is nothing to be done by ourselves. Act towards yourselves about your spiritual wakefulness as you would with natural wakefulness. Set your inventive faculties to work, and devise means for chasing away the sleep dragon. What would you do if you required to be awakened early? Perhaps you would set an alarm; a good thing, no doubt. Take care you set a spiritual alarm. Every Christian ought to keep one, and it should be so well set as to keep exact time, and so powerful as to arouse the most slumbering. A tender conscience, quick as the apple of the eye, is a precious preservative against sinful sleep; but it must never be tampered with, or its usefulness will soon end. When once the hour has come, down runs the alarm, the man starts up all at once, and says, "It is time to rise"; so should my conscience be so well regulated, that when a temptation is near, or a sinner is near me whom I ought to warn, my soul should at once take the alarm, and say, "Here is work to do—a sin to be conquered, or a soul to be instructed: now, therefore, perform the doing of it with all thy might! I hear the alarm, and I must bestir myself!" May we always maintain and retain such a special wakefulness that we may be at our post of duty or in our place of conflict with a punctuality

which none can gainsay. Oh for the alarum of a tender conscience !

Many of our friends who have to be up early in the morning ask the policeman to call them at the appointed hour. I may not compare the Christian minister with a policeman in some respects ; but yet he is one of God's officers, and it is part of his business to stir up drowsy professors. It is well to attend an earnest gospel ministry, where the minister's voice, under God's blessing, will be likely to wake you up. Faithful preachers are among God's best gifts. Cherish them, and be obedient to their admonitions. I have known persons become offended when a minister is "too personal;" but wise men always prize a ministry in proportion as it is personal to themselves. He who never tells me of my faults, nor makes me feel uneasy, is not likely to be the means of good to my soul. What is the use of a dog that never barks? Why have a doctor, and grow angry with him if he points out the source of your disease? Did God send us, as his messengers, to pander to your taste or flatter your vanity? We seek not your approval if it be not founded on right. I have often felt pleased when I have heard people confess, after their conversion, "I came to the Tabernacle, and at the first I could not endure the preaching. I hated the preacher, and raged at his doctrine; but I could not help coming again." Just so. Conscience makes men respect the gospel, even when their depravity makes them loathe it. They are held fast by the cords which they fain would cast from them. May it often be so, O my unregenerate hearers; that while my plain dealing excites your anger, it may nevertheless have a power over you; and may every man and woman here, whether saved or unsaved, feel that the preaching is the truth of God to his or her soul; and, whether liked or not liked, may it become the permanent means of arousing from sleep, and ultimately bringing to Christ every one of you to whom these words shall come. Be sure and attend an arousing ministry, and pray God to

make the ministry which you now listen to more and more an arousing ministry to your own soul. Pray for the preacher, for he is in the same danger as yourselves, for he too is compassed with infirmity. The minister soon goes to sleep unless God wakens him ; and what is more sad than to see the professed messenger of God become a traitor both to his Master and to men's souls by a lack of zealous affection? It is ill for the sheep if the shepherd himself be asleep. Woe to the camp where the sentry is given to slumber! May God deliver our country from being overrun with preachers whose souls are insensible concerning their grand work, and who love the bread of their office better than the glory of God or the good of their hearers.

I have known some persons adopt a plan for awaking in the morning which I can recommend spiritually at any rate. They have drawn up the blinds in the direction of the morning sun, that the sun might shine on their face and wake them. I know of no better way of waking for your soul, than letting the light, and the life, and the love of God shine full into your face. When the Sun of Righteousness arises he brings healing beneath his wings, and he brings awakening too. A man cannot think much of Christ, and love Christ much, and walk much in Christ's fellowship, and yet be asleep. The two who went to Emmaus in Immanuel's company, were their hearts cold? Nay, do not think so. "Did not our heart burn within us?" Yes, and your hearts will burn too, and your whole spiritual system will flame and glow if you walk in the company of Jesus. I can recommend constant fellowship with God as one of the best remedies for spiritual sloth, the surest provocative of holy zeal.

Many times people are awakened in the morning by the noise of the street in which they live. "I cannot sleep after such an hour," says one, "for I hear the tramp of those who are going into the city, and the grind of the street

traffic." At a certain time you hear the hammer of the blacksmith, the scream of an engine, or the heaving of machinery, and after that sleep is gone. The activities of the world ought to awaken Christians. Are worldlings so active? How active ought we to be! Do they labor and spend their sweat for earthly wages? How much more ought I to put forth my entire strength to serve so good a Master, whose reward of grace is everlasting bliss? The world is all astir to-day; let the church be all awake too.

We ought to be stimulated to supreme efforts by the activity of our fellow Christians. I find it does me much service to read the biographies of eminent servants of Christ, such as martyrs, missionaries, and reformers. I rise from reading their memorials feeling ashamed to be of so dwarfish a stature compared with these spiritual giants. What a humbling effect such a reflection ought to have on the do-nothings who swarm in the churches! but alas! these are not soon moved to judge themselves. With this one word we leave them: think of what some are doing, and be ashamed that you are doing so little in proportion to what they accomplish.

There are many ways of waking, but here is one, with which I will close my observations on this point. Hear the trumpet of the second coming. "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him," was the cry that awakened the virgins when they all slumbered and slept: may it have the like arousing power at this moment. We know not when Christ will come, nor is it for us to utter prophecies about it: the times and seasons are hidden from us. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Whether it will be before the Millennium, or after the Millennium, let those judge who can. I have no judgment upon it. I think, as you carefully read the Scriptures, you will feel more and more convinced that only this is clearly and certainly revealed—that the Lord will personally come in such an hour as we look not for him. Let that awaken us; let it keep us

always watchful, with loins girt and lamps trimmed, proving our faithful love to our blessed Master.

There are, it is clear, very many ways by which Christians may be awakened. God grant they may be effective to each and all. I think it was Sydney Smith who was once preaching a sermon about sleeping in church, and when he had done, he said, "Now, what good have I done? All those who sleep have been asleep through my sermon, and only those who are wakeful have heard me, and they did not need my rebukes and advice." I often feel that this is very much the preacher's case. Earnest people, when the congregation is exhorted to earnestness, take it home to themselves; but those persons who do nothing, and are most indolent, are the very ones who say, "I do not see the need of it; I do not want to be disturbed." Of course not! It is not only the mark of the sluggard to sleep, but it is another characteristic of him that he is wroth with those who would compel him to rise. "A little more sleep," says he, "a little more slumber;" he turns his heavy head upon the pillow once again, and wishes no blessings upon those who knock at his door so heavily. You sleepy professors are likely to do the same, but I will not refrain from knocking till you refrain from dozing. I pray God that there may be very few in this church of the incorrigible order, whose life is one long dream, a dream of self-aggrandizement, meanness, and littleness. May you and I, and all of us, be thoroughly earnest in the service of our Master, and if we cannot arouse others by our precept, at least let us not fail to try the force of our example.

IV. I must close with a word upon the fourth point, which is this—THE GREAT AND URGENT NEED THAT THE UN-CONVERTED SINNER SHOULD AWAKE. Hitherto I have spoken to the converted man: now let me address myself to the ungodly, and may the voice which shall call the dead to judgment now awaken him. You, you unconverted man,

are asleep; a deep and horrible sleep holds you fast. If it were not so, you would perceive your danger, and you would be alarmed. You have broken God's law; the fact is certain and solemn, though you treat it lightly. Punishment must follow every breach of that law, for God will not be mocked, nor suffer his government to be treated with contempt. For every transgression there is an appointed recompense of reward. The retribution which is your lawful due will not long be withheld: it is on its road towards you. The feet of justice are shod with wool: you hear not its coming, but it is as sure as it is silent. Its steps are swift, and its stroke overwhelming. Awaken, O man, and listen to this text: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready." No peril of plague, battle, shipwreck, or poison, can equal the hazard of an unpardoned soul. Beware, ye that forget God, for his terrors are past conception, and his wrath burneth as an oven.

If you were awakened, O sin-stricken transgressor, you would also perceive that there is a remedy for your disease, a rescue from your present danger. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and, "Whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." Forgiveness of sin is guaranteed to every one that rests in the work of Jesus, and all other necessary blessings are secured to him. If thou wert awake, thou wouldst not remain an unconverted sinner another hour, but thou wouldst turn unto God with full purpose of heart. If God would awaken thee, thou wouldst tremble at the jaws of hell which are open to receive thee; thou wouldst turn to Christ, and say, "Jesus, save me! Save me now!" You are asleep, sinner—you are asleep, or you would not take matters so coolly. I am afraid for you, and bowed down with amazement and dread. The mercy is that you may be awakened: you are not yet among the slain that go down into the pit. Oh that that almighty grace

would awaken you at this present moment, ere your doom is sealed and your damnation executed ! Here offer I my fervent prayers for you, believing that he to whom I pray is able to bring to holy sensibility the most stolid of mankind.

Strange ways God has of awakening his elect ones from their deadly slumbers. Awake them he will, and he will shake heaven and earth sooner than let any one of them perish in unfeeling security. He will strike them down as he did Paul, or send an earthquake to shake them, as he did to the gaoler at Philippi ; in his own way and time he will make them come to themselves and then to Christ. Remember the story of Augustine. To the grief of his dear mother, Monica, he had been leading a wicked life ; but God's time had come, and as Augustine walked in the garden he heard a little child say, "Take ! Read ! Take ! Read !" This induced him to take the Bible and read it. He no sooner read, than a passage came before his eyes which awakened him, and he sought a Saviour, and found him. Perhaps it will be a death in your house that will wake you—sad means, but often most effectual. A mother's death-bed has been a soul-saving sermon to many a family. Some sleepers need a thunderclap to arouse them. Pray, you dear people of God that are awake, that the sinner may be awakened, for there is this awful danger—that he may sleep himself into hell. Spiritual sleep deepens, the slumberer becomes more heavy still, the stupor more dense, till the conscience grows seared, and the soul is unimpressible ; the flesh is turned into stone, the heart is harder than steel. It may be that some of those who hear these words of warning may never wake to think about their souls till in hell they lift up their eyes. What an awful lifting up of the eyes will that be ! O you who are now peaceful and secure, what a change awaits you ! Hurlled from vainglorious security to blank despair in a moment ! You took it all so easily : you said, "Let me alone ; do not worry me ; there's time enough. The preacher ought not to frighten us with these bugbears ; we have a great deal else

to do besides listening to horrible stories of hell and damnation ;” and so you wrapped it up, and so you smoothed it over, but the end thereof who shall describe? Have you never heard of the Indian in his boat upon one of the great rivers of America? Somehow his moorings had broken and his canoe was in the power of the current. He was asleep, while his canoe was being borne rapidly along by the stream. He was sound asleep, and yet had good need to have been awake, for there was a tremendous cataract not far ahead. Persons on shore saw the canoe—saw that there was a man in it asleep; but their vigilance was of no use to the sleeper: it needed that he himself should be aware of his peril. The canoe quickened its pace, for the waters of the river grew more rapid as they approached the cataract; persons on shore began to cry out, and raise alarm on all sides, and at last the Indian was aroused. He started up, and began to use his paddle, but his strength was altogether insufficient for the struggle with the gigantic force of the waters around him. He was seen to spring upright in the boat and disappear—himself and the boat—in the fall. He had perished, for he woke too late! Some persons on their dying beds just wake up in time to see their danger, but not escape from it: they are carried right over the cataract of judgment and wrath. They are gone, forever gone, where mercy is succeeded by justice, and hope forbidden to enter. Let much prayer go up from believing hearts that God would awaken sinners now, and begin with those who come to the place of worship, and remain at ease in Zion. Ask for the arm of God to be revealed while the heavenly message is delivered; for this is our message: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” There is a man before me now asleep in his sins, whom God means to make a minister of Christ: he knows not the divine purpose, but there are lines of love in it for him. Arise, O slumberer, for Jesus calls thee! Awake, thou Saul of Tarsus, thou art a chosen vessel unto the Lord! Turn thou from thy sin: seek thou thy Sa-

viour. There is one here who has been a great sinner ; but the Lord intends to wash him in the cleansing fount, and clothe him in the righteousness of Christ. Come, thou guilty one, awake ! for mercy waits for thee. There is a poor weeping woman here who has gone far into sin ; but Jesus says, " Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more." Sister, awake ! Come and receive the mercy which Jesus Christ is ready to bestow upon thee ! God give thee waking grace, and saving grace.

May you and I, beloved brethren in Christ, awake to the most earnest and intense form of life *in* Christ and life *for* Christ. At once let us bestir ourselves : we may think it early, but it will be none too early ; may we awake now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

THE WITHERING WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- "THE VOICE SAID, CRY. AND HE SAID, WHAT SHALL I CRY? ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL THE GOODLINESS THEREOF IS AS THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD: THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH: BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD BLOWETH UPON IT: SURELY THE PEOPLE IS GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERETH, THE FLOWER FADETH: BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOREVER."—Isaiah xl. 6-8.
- "BEING BORN AGAIN, NOT OF CORRUPTIBLE SEED, BUT OF INCORRUPTIBLE, BY THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH LIVETH AND ABIDETH FOREVER. FOR ALL FLESH IS AS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN AS THE FLOWER OF THE GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERETH, AND THE FLOWER THEREOF FALLETH AWAY; BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOREVER. AND THIS IS THE WORD WHICH BY THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED UNTO YOU."—1. Peter i. 23-25.

THE passage in Isaiah which I have just read in your hearing may be used as a very eloquent description of our mortality, and if a sermon should be preached from it upon the frailty of human nature, the brevity of life, and the certainty of death, no one could dispute the appropriateness of the text. Yet I venture to question whether such a discourse would strike the central teaching of the prophet. Something more than the decay of our material flesh is intended here; the carnal mind, the flesh in another sense, was intended by the Holy Ghost when he bade his messenger proclaim those words. It does not seem to me that a mere expression of the mortality of our race was needed in this place by the context; it would hardly keep pace with the sublime revelations which surround it, and would in some measure be a digression from the subject in hand. The notion that we are simply and alone reminded of our mortality does not square with the New Testament exposition

of it in Peter, which I have also placed before you as a text. There is another and more spiritual meaning here besides and beyond that which would be contained in the great and very obvious truth, that all of us must die.

Look at the chapter in Isaiah with care. What is the subject of it? It is the divine consolation of Zion. Zion had been tossed to and fro with conflicts; she had been smarting under the result of sin. The Lord, to remove her sorrow, bids his prophets announce the coming of the long-expected Deliverer, the end and accomplishment of all her warfare and the pardon of all her iniquity. There is no doubt that this is the theme of the prophecy; and further, there is no sort of question about the next point, that the prophet goes on to foretell the coming of John the Baptist as the harbinger of the Messiah. We have no difficulty in the explanation of the passage, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God;" for the New Testament again and again refers this to the Baptist and his ministry. The object of the coming of the Baptist and the mission of the Messiah, whom he heralded, was the manifestation of divine glory. Observe the fifth verse: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Well, what next? Was it needful to mention man's mortality in this connection? We think not. But there is much more appropriateness in the succeeding verses, if we see their deeper meaning. Do they not mean this? In order to make room for the display of the divine glory in Christ Jesus and his salvation, there would come a withering of all the glory wherein man boasts himself: the flesh should be seen in its true nature as corrupt and dying, and the grace of God alone should be exalted. This would be seen under the ministry of John the Baptist first, and should be the preparatory work of the Holy Ghost in men's hearts, in all time, in order that the glory of the Lord should be revealed and human pride be forever confounded.

The Spirit blows upon the flesh, and that which seemed vigorous becomes weak, that which was fair to look upon is smitten with decay; the true nature of the flesh is thus discovered, its deceit is laid bare, its power is destroyed, and there is space for the dispensation of the ever-abiding word, and for the rule of the Great Shepherd, whose words are spirit and life. There is a withering wrought by the Spirit which is the preparation for the sowing and implanting by which salvation is wrought.

The withering before the sowing was very marvellously fulfilled in the preaching of John the Baptist. Most appropriately he carried on his ministry in the desert, for a spiritual desert was all around him; he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. It was not his work to plant, but to hew down. The fleshy religion of the Jews was then in its prime. Phariseism stalked through the streets in all its pomp; men complacently rested in outward ceremonies only, and spiritual religion was at the lowest conceivable ebb. Here and there might be found a Simeon and an Anna, but for the most part men knew nothing of spiritual religion, but said in their hearts: "We have Abraham to our father, and this is enough." What a stir he made when he called the lordly Pharisees a generation of vipers! How he shook the nation with the declaration, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees!" Stern as Elias, his work was to level the mountains, and lay low every lofty imagination. That word, "Repent," was as a scorching wind to the verdure of self-righteousness, a killing blast for the confidence of ceremonialism. His food and his dress called for fasting and mourning. The outward token of his ministry declared the death amid which he preached, as he buried in the waters of Jordan those who came to him. "Ye must die and be buried, even as he who is to come will save by death and burial." This was the meaning of the emblem which he set before the crowd. His typical act was as thorough in its teaching as were his words: and as if that were not enough, he

warned them of a yet more searching and trying baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and of the coming of one whose fan was in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor. The Spirit in John blew as the rough north wind, searching and withering, and made him to be a destroyer of the vain gloryings of a fleshly religion, that the spiritual faith might be established.

When our Lord himself actually appeared, he came into a withered land, whose glories had all departed. Old Jesse's stem was bare, and our Lord was the branch which grew out of his root. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, when Shiloh came. An alien sat on David's throne, and the Roman called the covenant-land his own. The lamp of prophecy burned but dimly, even if it had not utterly gone out. No Isaiah had arisen of late to console them, nor even a Jeremiah to lament their apostacy. The whole economy of Judaism was as a worn-out vesture; it had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. The priesthood was disarranged. Luke tells us that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests that year—two in a year or at once, a strange setting aside of the laws of Moses. All the dispensation which gathered around the visible, or as Paul calls it, the "worldly" sanctuary, was coming to a close; and when our Lord had finished his work, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the sacrifices were abolished, the priesthood of Aaron was set aside, and carnal ordinances were abrogated, for the Spirit revealed spiritual things. When he came who was made a priest, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life," there was "a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof."

Such are the facts of history; but I am not about to dilate upon them: I am coming to your own personal histories—to the experience of every child of God. In every one of us it must be fulfilled that all that is of the flesh in us, seeing it is but as grass, must be withered, and the come-

liness thereof must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls, and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. He must so convince us of sin, and so reveal ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see that the flesh profiteth nothing; that our fallen nature is corruption itself, and that "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." There must be brought home to us the sentence of death upon our former legal and carnal life, that the incorruptible seed of the word of God, implanted by the Holy Ghost, may be in us, and abide in us forever.

The subject of this morning is the withering work of the Spirit upon the souls of men, and when we have spoken upon it, we shall conclude with a few words upon the implanting work, which always follows where this withering work has been performed.

I. Turning then to THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN CAUSING THE GOODLINESS OF THE FLESH TO FADE, let us, first, observe that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man in withering up that which is of the flesh, is *very unexpected*. You will observe in our text, that even the speaker himself, though doubtless one taught of God, when he was bidden to cry, said, "What shall I cry?" Even he did not know that in order to the comforting of God's people, there must first be experienced a preliminary visitation. Many preachers of God's gospel have forgotten that the law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. They have sown on the unbroken fallow ground, and forgotten that the plough must break the clods. We have seen too much of trying to sew without the sharp needle of the Spirit's convincing power. Preachers have labored to make Christ precious to those who think themselves rich and increased in goods; and it has been labor in vain. It is our duty to preach Jesus Christ even to self-righteous sinners, but it is certain that Jesus Christ will never be accepted by them while they hold themselves in high esteem. Only the sick will welcome the phy-

zeian. It is the work of the Spirit of God to convince men of sin, and until they are convinced of sin, they will never be led to seek the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ. I am persuaded, that wherever there is a real work of grace in any soul, it begins with a pulling down: the Holy Ghost does not build on the old foundation. Wood, hay, and stubble will not do for him to build upon. He will come as the fire, and cause a conflagration of all proud nature's Babels. He will break our bow and cut our spear in sunder, and burn our chariot in the fire. When every sandy foundation is gone, then, but not till then, behold he will lay in our souls the great foundation-stone, chosen of God, and precious. The awakened sinner, when he asks that God would have mercy upon him, is much astonished to find that, instead of enjoying a speedy peace, his soul is bowed down within him under a sense of divine wrath. Naturally enough he inquires: "Is this the answer to my prayer? I prayed the Lord to deliver me from sin and self, and is this the way in which he deals with me? I said, 'Hear me,' and behold he wounds me with the wounds of a cruel one. I said, 'Clothe me,' and lo! he has torn off from me the few rags which covered me before, and my nakedness stares me in the face. I said, 'Wash me,' and behold he has plunged me in the ditch till mine own clothes do abhor me. Is this the way of grace?" Sinner, be not surprised: it is even so. Perceivest thou not the cause of it? How canst thou be healed while the proud flesh is in thy wound? It must come out. It is the only way to heal thee permanently: it would be folly to film over thy sore, or heal thy flesh, and leave the leprosy within thy bones. The great Physician will cut with his sharp knife till the corrupt flesh be removed, for only thus can a sure healing work be wrought in thee. Dost thou not see that it is divinely wise that before thou art clothed thou shouldst be stripped! What, wouldst thou have Christ's lustrous righteousness outside whiter than any fuller can make it, and thine own filthy

rag concealed within? Nay, man; they must be put away; not a single thread of thine own must be left upon thee. It cannot be that God should cleanse thee until he has made thee see somewhat of thy defilement; for thou wouldst never value the precious blood which cleanses us from all sin if thou hadst not first of all been made to mourn that thou art altogether an unclean thing.

The convincing work of the Spirit, wherever it comes, is unexpected, and even to the child of God in whom this process has still to go on, it is often startling. We begin again to build that which the Spirit of God had destroyed. Having begun in the spirit, we act as if we would be made perfect in the flesh; and then when our mistaken up-building has to be levelled with the earth, we are almost as astonished as we were when first the scales fell from our eyes. In some such condition as this was Newton when he wrote:—

“I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

’Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favor’d hour,
At once he’d answer my request,
And by his love’s constraining power
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart;
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in ev’ry part.”

Ah, marvel not, for thus the Lord is wont to answer his people. The voice which saith, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,” achieves its purpose by first making them hear the cry, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.”

2. Furthermore, *this withering is after the usual order of the divine operation.* If we consider well the way of God, we shall not be astonished that he beginneth with his people by terrible things in righteousness. Observe the method of creation. I will not venture upon any dogmatic theory of geology, but there seems to be every probability that this world has been fitted up and destroyed, refitted and then destroyed again, many times before the last arranging of it for the habitation of men. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"? then came a long interval, and at length, at the appointed time, during seven days, the Lord prepared the earth for the human race. Consider then the state of matters when the great architect began his work. What was there in the beginning? Originally, nothing. When he commanded the ordering of the earth how was it? "The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." There was no trace of another's plan to interfere with the great architect. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding"? He received no contribution of column or pillar towards the temple which he intended to build. The earth was, as the Hebrew puts it, Tohu and Bohu, disorder and confusion—in a word, chaos. So it is in the new creation. When the Lord new—creates us, he borrows nothing from the old man, but makes all things new. He does not repair and add a new wing to the old house of our depraved nature, but he builds a new temple for his own praise. We are spiritually without form and empty, and darkness is upon the face of our heart, and his word comes to us, saying, "Light be," and there is light, and, ere long, life and every precious thing.

To take another instance from the ways of God. When man had fallen, when did the Lord bring him the gospel? The first whisper of the gospel, as you know, was, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed

and her seed. He shall bruise thy head." That whisper came to man shivering in the presence of his Maker, having nothing more to say by way of excuse ; but standing guilty before the Lord. When did the Lord God clothe our parents? Not until first of all he had put the question, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" Not until the fig-leaves had utterly failed did the Lord bring in the covering skin of the sacrifice, and wrap them in it. If you will pursue the meditation upon the acts of God with men, you will constantly see the same thing. God has given us a wonderful type of salvation in Noah's ark ; but Noah was saved in that ark in connection with death ; he himself, as it were, immured alive in a tomb, and all the world besides left to destruction. All other hope for Noah was gone, and then the ark rose upon the waters. Remember the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt : it occurred when they were in the saddest plight, and their cry went up to heaven by reason of their bondage. When no arm brought salvation, then with a high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord brought forth his people. Everywhere before the salvation there comes the humbling of the creature, the overthrow of human hope. As in the back-woods of America, before there can be tillage, the planting of cities, the arts of civilization, and the transactions of commerce, the woodman's axe must hack and hew : the stately trees of centuries must fall : the roots must be burned, the old reign of nature disturbed. The old must go before the new can come. Even thus the Lord takes away the first, that he may establish the second. The first heaven and the first earth must pass away, or there cannot be a new heaven and a new earth. Now, as it has been outwardly, we ought to expect that it would be the same within us ; and when these witherings and fadings occur in our souls, we should only say, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good."

3. I would have you notice, thirdly, that we are taught in our text *how universal this process is in its range over the*

hearts of all those upon whom the Spirit works. The withering is a withering of what? Of part of the flesh and some portion of its tendencies? Nay, observe, "*All* flesh is grass; and *all* the goodliness thereof"—the very choice and pick of it—"is as the flower of the field:" and what happens to the grass? Does any of it live? "The grass withereth," all of it. The flower, will not that abide? So fair a thing, has not that an immortality? No, it fades; it utterly falls away. So, wherever the Spirit of God breathes on the soul of man, there is a withering of every thing that is of the flesh, and it is seen that to be carnally minded is death. Of course, we all know and confess that where there is a work of grace, there must be a destruction of our delight in the pleasures of the flesh. When the Spirit of God breathes on us, that which was sweet becomes bitter; that which was bright becomes dim. A man cannot love sin and yet possess the life of God. If he takes pleasure in fleshly joys wherein he once delighted, he is still what he was: he minds the things of the flesh, and therefore he is after the flesh, and he shall die. The world and the lusts thereof are to the unregenerate as beautiful as the meadows in spring, when they are bedecked with flowers, but to the regenerate soul they are a wilderness, a salt land, and not inhabited. Of those very things wherein we once took delight we say, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." We cry to be delivered from the poisonous joys of earth. we loathe them, and wonder that we could once riot in them. Beloved hearers, do you know what this kind of withering means? Have you seen the lusts of the flesh, and the pomps and the pleasures thereof, all fade away before your eyes? It must be so, or the Spirit of God has not visited your soul.

But mark, wherever the Spirit of God comes, he destroys the goodliness and flower of the flesh; that is to say our righteousness withers as our sinfulness. Before the Spirit comes, we think ourselves as good as the best. We say, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up,"

and we superciliously ask, "What lack I yet?" Have we not been moral? Nay, have we not even been religious? We confess that we may have committed faults, but we think them very venial, and we venture, in our wicked pride, to imagine that, after all, we are not so vile as the word of God would lead us to think. Ah, my dear hearer, when the Spirit of God blows on the comeliness of thy flesh, its beauty will fade as a leaf, and thou wilt have quite another idea of thyself; thou wilt then find no language too severe in which to describe thy past character. Searching deep into thy motives, and investigating that which moved thee to thine actions, thou wilt see so much of evil, that thou wilt cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Where the Holy Ghost has withered up in us our self-righteousness, he has not half completed his work; there is much more to be destroyed yet, and among the rest, away must go our boasted power of resolution. Most people conceive that they can turn to God whenever they resolve to do so. "I am a man of such strength of mind," says one, "that if I made up my mind to be religious, I should be without difficulty." "Ah," saith another volatile spirit, "I believe that one of these days I can correct the errors of the past, and commence a new life." Ah, dear hearers, the resolutions of the flesh are goodly flowers, but they must all fade. When visited by the Spirit of God, we find that even when the will is present with us, how to perform that which we would, we find not; yea, and we discover that our will is averse to all that is good, and that naturally we will not come unto Christ that we may have life. What poor, frail things resolutions are when seen in the light of God's Spirit!

Still the man will say, "I believe I have, after all, within myself an enlightened conscience and an intelligence that will guide me aright. The light of nature I will use, and I do not doubt that if I wander somewhat, I shall find

my way back again." Ah, man! thy wisdom, which is the very flower of thy nature, what is it but folly, though thou knowest it not? Unconverted and unrenewed, thou art in God's sight no wiser than the wild ass's colt. I wish thou wert in thine own esteem humbled as a little child at Jesus' feet, and made to cry, "Teach thou me."

When the withering wind of the Spirit moves over the carnal mind, it reveals the death of the flesh in all respects, especially in the matter of power towards that which is good. We then learn that word of our Lord: "Without me ye can do nothing." When I was seeking the Lord, I not only believed that I could not pray without divine help, but I felt in my very soul that I could not. Then I could not even feel aright, or mourn as I would, or groan as I would. I longed to long more after Christ; but, alas! I could not even feel that I needed him as I ought to feel it. This heart was then as hard as adamant, as dead as those that rot in their graves. Oh, what would I at times have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not; longed to believe, but could not; I felt bound, hampered and paralyzed. This is a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but a needful one; for the faith of the flesh is not the faith of God's elect. The faith which justifies the soul is the gift of God and not of ourselves. That repentance which is the work of the flesh will need to be repented of. The flower of the flesh must wither; only the seed of the Spirit will produce fruit unto perfection. The heirs of heaven are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God. If the work in us be not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will droop and die when most we require its protection; and its end will be as the grass which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven.

4. You see, then, the universality of this withering work within us, but I beg you also to notice *the completeness of it*. The grass, what does it do? Droop? nay,

wither. "The flower of the field:" what of that? Does it hang its head a little? No, according to Isaiah it "fades;" and according to Peter it "falleth away." There is no reviving it with showers, it has come to its end. Even thus are the awakened led to see that in their flesh there dwelleth no good thing. What dying and withering work some of God's servants have had in their souls! Look at John Bunyan, as he describes himself in his "Grace Abounding!" For how many months and even years was the Spirit engaged in writing death upon all that was the old Bunyan, in order that he might become by grace a new man fitted to track the pilgrims along their heavenly way. We have not all endured the ordeal so long, but in every child of God there must be a death to sin, to the law, and to self, which must be fully accomplished ere he is perfected in Christ and taken to heaven. Corruption cannot inherit incorruption; it is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body, and therefore live. But cannot the fleshly mind be improved? By no means; for "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Cannot you improve the old nature? No; "ye must be born again." Can it not be taught heavenly things? No. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There is nothing to be done with the old nature but to let it be laid in the grave; it must be dead, and buried, and when it is so, then the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth forever, will develop gloriously, the fruit of the new birth will come to maturity, and grace shall be exalted in glory. The old nature never does improve, it is earthly, and sensual, and devilish in the saint of eighty years of age as it was when first he came to Christ; it is unimproved and unimprovable; towards God it is enmity itself; every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil, and that continually. The

old nature called "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other," neither can there be peace between them.

5. Let us further notice that all *this withering work in the soul is very painful*. As you read these verses do they not strike you as having a very funereal tone ? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower faileth." This is mournful work ; but it must be done. I think those who experience much of it when they first come to Christ have great reason to be thankful. Their course in life will, in all probability, be much brighter and happier, for I have noticed that persons who are converted very easily, and come to Christ with but comparatively little knowledge of their own depravity, have to learn it afterwards, and they remain for a long time babes in Christ, and are perplexed with matters that would not have troubled them if they had experienced a deeper work at first. No, sir ; if grace has begun to build in your soul and left any of the old walls of self-trust standing, they will have to come down sooner or later. You may congratulate yourself upon their remaining, but it is a false congratulation, your glorying is not good. I am sure of this, that Christ will never put a new piece upon an old garment, or new wine in old bottles : he knows the rent would be worse in the long run, and the bottles would burst. All that is of nature's spinning must be unravelled. The natural building must come down, lath and plaster, roof and foundation, and we must have a house not made with hands. It was a great mercy for our city of London that the great fire cleared away all the old buildings which were the lair of the plague, a far healthier city was then built ; and it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps right away all his own righteousness and strength, when he makes him feel that he is nothing and can be nothing, and drives him to confess that Christ must be in all, and that his only strength lies in the eternal

might of the ever-blessed Spirit. Sometimes in a house of business an old system has been going on for years, and it has caused much confusion, and allowed much dishonesty. You come in as a new manager, and you adopt an entirely new plan. Now, try if you can, and graft your method on to the old system. How it will worry you! Year after year you say to yourself, "I cannot work it: if I had swept the whole away and started afresh, clear from the beginning, it would not have given me one-tenth of the trouble." God does not intend to graft the system of grace upon corrupt nature, nor to make the new Adam grow out of the old Adam, but he intends to teach us this: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Salvation is not of the flesh, but of the Lord alone; that which is born of the flesh is only flesh at the best; and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It must be the Spirit's work altogether, or it is not what God will accept.

6. Observe, brethren, that although this is painful *it is inevitable*. I have already entrenched upon this, and shown you how necessary it is that all of the old should be taken away; but let me further remark that it is inevitable that the old should go, because it is in itself corruptible. Why does the grass wither? Because it is a withering thing. "Its root is ever in its grave, and it must die." How could it spring out of the earth, and be immortal? It is no amaranth: it blooms not in Paradise: it grows in a soil on which the curse has fallen. Every supposed good thing that grows out of your own self, is like yourself, mortal, and it must die. The seeds of corruption are in all the fruits of manhood's tree; let them be as fair to look upon as Eden's clusters, they must decay.

Moreover, it would never do, my brother, that there should be something of the flesh in our salvation and something of the Spirit; for if it were so there would be a division of the honor. Hitherto the praises of God; beyond this my own praises. If I were to win heaven partly

through what I had done, and partly through what Christ had done, and if the energy which sanctified me was in a measure my own, and in a measure divine, they that divide the work shall divide the reward, and the songs of heaven while they would be partly to Jehovah must also be partly to the creature. But it shall not be. Down, proud flesh! Down! I say. Though thou purge and cleanse thyself as thou mayst, thou art to the core corrupt; though thou labor unto weariness, thou buildest wood that will be burned, and stubble that will be turned to ashes. Give up thine own self-confidence, and let the work be, and the merit be where the honor shall be, lamely, with God alone. It is inevitable, then, that there should be all this withering.

7. This last word by way of comfort to any that are passing through the process we are describing, and I hope some of you are. It gives me great joy when I hear that you unconverted ones are very miserable, for the miseries which the Holy Spirit works are always the prelude to happiness. *It is the Spirit's work to wither.* I rejoice in our translation: "Because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." It is true the passage may be translated, "The wind of the Lord bloweth upon it." One word, as you know, is used in Hebrew both for "wind" and "Spirit," and the same is true of the Greek; but let us retain the old translation here, for I conceive it to be the real meaning of the text. The Spirit of God it is that withers the flesh. It is not the devil that killed my self-righteousness. I might be afraid if it were: nor was it myself that humbled myself by a voluntary and needless self-degradation, but it was the Spirit of God. Better to be broken in pieces by the Spirit of God, than to be made whole by the flesh! What doth the Lord say? "I kill." But what next? "I make alive." He never makes any alive but those he kills. Blessed be the Holy Ghost when he kills me, when he drives the sword through the very bowels of my own merits and my self-confidence, for then he will make me alive. "I wound, and I

heal." He never heals those whom he has not wounded. Then blessed be the hand that wounds; let it go on wounding; let it cut and tear; let it lay bare to me myself at my very worst, that I may be driven to self-despair, and may fall back upon the free mercy of God, and receive it as a poor, guilty, lost, helpless, undone sinner, who casts himself into the arms of sovereign grace, knowing that God must give a I, and Christ must be all, and the Spirit must work all, and man must be as clay in the potter's hands, that the Lord may do with him as seemeth him good. Rejoice, dear brother, however low you are brought, for if the Spirit humbles you he means no evil, but he intends infinite good to your soul.

II. Now, let us close with a few sentences concerning THE IMPLANTATION.

According to Peter, although the flesh withers, and the flower thereof falls away, yet in the children of God there is an unwithering something of another kind. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." "The word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Now, the gospel is of use to us because it is not of human origin. If it were of the flesh, all it could do for us would not land us beyond the flesh; but the gospel of Jesus Christ is super-human, divine and spiritual. In its conception it was of God; its great gift, even the Saviour, is a divine gift; and all its teachings are full of deity. If you, my hearer, believe a gospel which you have thought out for yourself, or a philosophical gospel which comes from the brain of man, it is of the flesh and will wither, and you will die and be lost through trusting in it. The only word that can bless you and be a seed in your soul must be the living and incorruptible word of the eternal Spirit. Now this is the incorruptible word, that "God was made flesh and dwelt

among us;" that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the incorruptible word, that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Now, brethren, this is the seed; but before it can grow in your soul, it must be planted there by the Spirit. Do you receive it this morning? Then the Holy Spirit implants it in your soul. Do you leap up to it, and say, "I believe it! I grasp it! On the incarnate God I fix my hope; the substitutionary sacrifice, the complete atonement of Christ is all my confidence; I am reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus"? Then you possess the living seed within your soul.

And what is the result of it? Why, then there comes, according to the text, a new life into us, as the result of the indwelling of the living word, and our being born again by it. A new life it is; it is not the old nature putting out its better parts; not the old Adam refining and purifying itself, and rising to something better. No; have we not said aforetime that the flesh withers, and the flower thereof fades? It is an entirely new life. Ye are as much new creatures at your regeneration, as if you had never existed, and had been for the first time created. "Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The child of God is beyond and above other men. Other men do not possess the life which he has received. They are but duplex—body and soul have they. He is of triple nature—he is spirit, soul and body. A fresh principle, a spark of divine life has dropped into his soul: he is no longer a natural or carnal man, but he has become a spiritual man, understanding spiritual things, and possessing a life far superior to any thing that belongs to the rest

of mankind. Oh that God, who has withered in the souls of any of you that which is of the flesh, may speedily grant you the new birth through the Word.

Now observe, to close, wherever this new life comes through the word, it is incorruptible, it lives and abides forever. To get the good seed out of a true believer's heart and to destroy the new nature in him, is a thing attempted by earth and hell, but never yet achieved. Pluck the sun out of the firmament, and you shall not even then be able to pluck grace out of a regenerate heart. It "liveth and abideth forever," saith the text; it can neither corrupt of itself nor be corrupted. "It sinneth not, because it is born of God." "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You have a natural life—that will die, it is of the flesh. You have a spiritual life—of that it is written: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." You have now within you the noblest and truest immortality: you must live as God liveth, in peace and joy, and happiness. But oh, remember, dear hearer, if you have not this you "shall not see life." What then—shall you be annihilated? Ah! no, but "the wrath of the Lord is upon you." You shall exist, though you shall not live. Of life you shall know nothing, for that is the gift of God in Christ Jesus: but of an everlasting death, full of torment and anguish, you shall be the wretched heritor—"the wrath of God abideth on him." You shall be cast into "the lake of fire, which is the second death." You shall be one of those whose "worm dieth not, and whose fire is not quenched." May God, the ever-blessed Spirit, visit you! If he be now striving with you, Oh quench not his divine flame! Trifle not with any holy thought you have. If this morning you must confess that you are not born again, be humbled by it. Go and seek mercy of the Lord, entreat him to deal gra-

ciously with you and save you. Many who have had nothing but moonlight prized it, and ere long they have sunlight. Above all, remember what the quickening seed is, and reverence it when you hear it preached, "for this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you." Respect it and receive it. Remember that the quickening seed is all wrapped up in this sentence: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

MARAH; OR, THE BITTER WATERS SWEETENED.

AND WHEN THEY CAME TO MARAH, THEY COULD NOT DRINK OF THE WATERS OF MARAH, FOR THEY WERE BITTER: THEREFORE THE NAME OF IT WAS CALLED MARAH. AND THE PEOPLE MURMURED AGAINST MOSES, SAYING, WHAT SHALL WE DRINK? AND HE CRIED UNTO THE LORD; AND THE LORD SHOWED HIM A TREE, WHICH WHEN HE HAD CAST INTO THE WATERS, THE WATERS WERE MADE SWEET."—Exodus xv. 23, 24, 25.

WHAT a sudden change from the sound of the timbrel to the voice of murmuring! You saw the maidens dancing three days ago, and you little dreamed that they would make part of yonder clamorous throng who surround the servant of God, and cry, "What shall we drink?" Such are the changes of our outward conditions and of our inward feelings; so fickle and so mutable is man. What is there that can be rested upon in this mortal life? We say to-day, "My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved;" to-morrow *terra firma* there is none, and we are tossed upon a stormy sea. Our life is like an April day, the sunshine alternates with the shower; or like each day of all the year, the morning and the evening are needful to complete it. Quick on the heels of light treads the darkness, followed with equal haste by light again. The sun's rule, at this golden hour, is but temporary; he must abdicate in favor of the usurping stars, but they, in their turn, must give way before his lordly presence yet again. This world, which is our inn, owns to the sign of the "Checkers"—the blacks and whites are everywhere. We can be sure of nothing between here and heaven of the things which are seen; but of this we may be certain, that

underneath all the outward change there is the immutable love of God towards his people, and that, after all, the change lies only in the seeming things, not in the things which truly are; for the things which are not seen are eternal, and changes come not there; it is but in the things which are seen that the change occurs. Let us set the less store by earth, because its fashion abides not. Let us prize heaven more, because it cannot fade.

I. The text directs your attention, first of all, to THE EVILS OF THE WILDERNESS. We need not spend much time in thinking of these evils, because they throw themselves in our way often enough; and the tendency of our mind is unduly to exaggerate them. Notice that the perils and trials of the wilderness occur *very early in the pilgrim life*. It is a notion, I have no doubt, of very young Christians who still have the shell upon their heads and are scarce hatched, that their trials are over now that they have become winged with faith; they had far better have reckoned that their trials have begun with tenfold force, now that they are numbered with the servants of the Most High. Whatever else comes not to thee, O servant of God, this will surely be fulfilled, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" Some privileges are not common to all the adopted, but the privilege of chastisement is universal to all true sons. It is the token of bastardy if the rod be escaped, but scourging is the sure pledge of paternal love. I say, however, that these trials come very soon. Israel was no sooner across the Red Sea than they went three days into the wilderness of Shur, but found no water; and on the third day, when they did arrive at a fountain, they found worse than no water, for it was so brackish, so altogether unfit for drinking, that though they thought they would have drunk any thing, they could not possibly drink this. What, in three days, must they that sang unto the Lord because he triumphed gloriously, nauseate

the water for which their thirst makes them pant? In three days shall they be reduced to such straits that they must drink or die, and yet feel that they should die if they were to drink of such nauseous streams? Ah yes, with some of us our delight at conversion was very great, our exhilaration at finding the Saviour was something never to be forgotten, and yet only a day or so after we were stumbled with great temptation, amazed at the discovery of the evil of our hearts, or tried by the coldness of our fellow Christians, or the cruelty of the outside world, so that we found we had come to Marah. And this was all the severer trial, because some of us had found a degree of pleasure in the ways of sin, and now it stumbled us to find sorrow in the ways of God. When Israel was in Egypt, they drank of the river Nile. No ordinary water that. To this day the dwellers on the banks of the Nile assert that the water has a peculiar taste not to be discovered in any other stream, and they prefer the waters of the Nile to all the waters in the world besides. What a change from the sweetness of the Nile to the bitterness of Marah? Did not the suggestion rise in their hearts, "It was better with us in the bondage of Egypt, with water in abundance, than it is now in the liberty of the wilderness with the bitterness of Marah?" The devil tempted some of us at the very first by saying: "See what you have got by being a Christian. While you were as others are, your mind had mirth; now you have come out and followed the Crucified, you have lost the liveliness of your spirits, the brightness of your wit—that which made life worth having is taken away from you." Young Christian, is that your case to-day? Be not stumbled, neither believe the enemy. Man, it were better to die at Marah free, than live a slave by the sweet Nile. Even men that know not the Spirit of God have felt it were better to die free than live slaves; and, truly, to be a slave of Satan is so degrading a thing, that if this mouth were forever filled with Marah's bitterness, yet were it better to be so than to be enchanted with the pleasures of sin. Yet there

early trials are very severe, and need much grace lest they cause us great mischief.

Secondly, these evils *assume varied shapes*. You noticed that for the first three days in the wilderness they found no water ; that is one trial. But the next day, or at the end of the third day, they found water. Now they thought their trial was over : alas ! it had only changed its shape. They found water, but it was too bitter to drink. Do not be in a hurry to change your trials, dear friends. We have heard of some who have repined that they had no children, and, like Rachel, their cry was, "Give me children, or else I die." Ere long they have had children who proved to be far worse than none. Better no son than an Absalom. We have known those who were in good health, but discontented because they had no wealth ; they have gained wealth at last, but with an injured constitution, they have had no power to enjoy it. If we could choose our trials, we might well remember the wisdom of the old philosopher, who told the people oppressed by a tyrant to be content with his tyranny, "for," said he, "it is with oppressors as with mosquitoes, let those suck which are now upon you, for if you drive those off, the fresh ones which will succeed them will be hungrier than those that are there now : better be content with the tyranny you have, than seek a new one." It is much the same with the trials we now feel ; you will get used to them by degrees : they will spend their force. Desire for a change of trials may only be a wish for a worse affliction, for whether was the worse, to have no water, or to have the water and to find it so bitter that you could not drink it ?

Yet when God changes the trial be well satisfied that it should be changed. You may anticipate, Christian, that you will have your trial changed : indeed, you must reckon that it is so. I mean, that if to-day it is smooth sailing with you, though yesterday waves rolled mountains high, it is only a change of trial ; you are now tried by prosperity, which may

prove to be a more severe test for you than adversity. Is the wind balmy, blows it from the south? It is but another trial for thee, be sure of that, for they who have withstood the northern blast and grown the ruddier and stronger for its influence, have often grown faint and weary under softer airs. Watch thou in all things, thy trials are with thee constantly; the crucible is changed, the fire still burns.

Note again, that as the trials of the wilderness came soon, and assumed various shapes, so often do the trials of the Christian *touch very vital matters*. They found no water, or finding it, it was bitter. It is not said they found no wine—a small trial indeed; it is not said they found no milk, yet might the infant children have been sorely troubled by such a want; but they found no drinkable water. Here was a denial of an essential of life. They must have water, it was no luxury, it was a necessity; with the hot, burning sand beneath them reflecting the fierce heat of a cruel sun, not to have water in the wilderness is to feel an urgent necessity producing a terrible pain. God may touch us, and probably has done so or will, in points most vital. To be tried in the loss of some of your superfluities, my brethren, is but little; but to lose even the little that you had to live upon, to be brought to straitness of bread, this is real tribulation. To have the hand put forth to touch your bone and your flesh, this is affliction. Believe me, our virtues and graces look very fine, and we think much of them until they undergo that ordeal, but that test often takes from them their gloss and beauty; we find how great our weakness is when the very marrow of our bones seems to be a den in which pains, like robbers, hide themselves. God may touch you in the most beloved object of your heart. It is not one child that is taken out of many, but the only one; it is not a friend, or distant relative, but the partner of your bosom is laid low. Do not wonder if the trial affects you greatly, and comes home to your soul and heart. It is one of God's determinations that trials shall not be mock trials with his servants,

and the grace given shall not be imaginary, but true. God never plays at chastening his children. No trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. By the blueness of the wound the heart is made better; if it do not bruise, it doth not benefit. Very much in proportion to the bitterness felt will be the benefit that will come of it. They found no water. O my God, to what straits dost thou reduce thine own people; thine own people who carry with them the title-deeds of a land that flows with milk and honey! Jordan and Kishon are theirs, and yet they find only Marah to drink while they are here; thine own people for whom thou hast appointed that they shall dwell in a land of brooks and rivers of water, where they shall sit every man under his vine and fig-tree; these, thy darlings, whom thou hast brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm, are brought to the extreme of poverty, and the little that they have has often a bitter taste infused into it.

Notice once again, there is *a reason why the earthly mercies which supply our necessities must be more or less bitter*. When Israel received water out of the rock it was not bitter, but this water came out of the sand. To this day in the desert water is found in different places, but where it oozes up from a sandy bed it is almost without exception so brackish and bitter, by reason of the sand, that it is not fit for human drinking; and even the camels, unless they are sore pressed, turn away from it with great aversion. The sand has tainted it, the flavor of earth has got into the blessing. So it is with most of our blessings; by reason of our sin and infirmity too much of the flavor of earth enters into the gift of heaven. Our common mercies, when we receive them direct from heaven as God gives them, are mercies indeed—cool, flowing streams that gush from the rock of his favor; but we are so apt to trace them to the creature, so ready to look upon them as derived from earth instead of coming from heaven; and just in that proportion may we expect to find bitterness in them. What can you hope for in a wilderness,

but productions congruous to it? Canaan! who looks for bitterness there? Is it not the land that flows with milk and honey? Sweet land, when shall we reach thee? Thy sweetness is but congruous to thyself. But here, in this wilderness, where we have no continuing city, who looks for the streams of Lebanon? who hopes to find Canaan's fruits in the wilderness of Sin? As well seek to gather from the briny sea the sweet fruits of the palm or the luscious clusters of the vine, as hope to find, amidst these changing scenes, comforts that shall be all comfortable, and joys that shall be all joyous. No, they will be comforts, but they will be often embittered; they will be joyous somewhat, but the earthly flavor in them will make us remember that this is not our rest.

I know not that I ought to detain you longer with these evils of the wilderness. I do not feel it is wrong to speak of them, for we do not mention them with any view of discouraging those who have set out on pilgrimage; we are not like those who hold up their hands and say, "The lions, the giants, the dragons; young pilgrim, you will never reach the land of promise;" but yet we would imitate the Saviour, who said to the follower who thought he could follow him whithersoever he might go, "Sit down, and count the cost." There are trials for you, ye followers of Christ, if there are none for others—peculiar trials for you, peculiar joys ten thousand times outweighing them, but yet peculiar griefs, new griefs of a new life of which it will be a blessed thing to have been a participant; but there they are, and we will not deceive you. For you there will be Marahs that others may not know, and for you there will be long thirsts where others drink to the full; nevertheless, we will take Christ and his reproach, Christ and his Marah, rather than the world with its sweetness, for with every drawback that is supposable to Christ Jesus, he is better than the world with all the additions that can be invented by the sons of mirth.

II. Thus much on the first point, the evils of the wilderness. Now, secondly, THE TENDENCY OF HUMAN NATURE. The people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Do not say "human nature," says one, say, "the tendency of Jewish nature." Ah, but if any thing, I would prefer the people in the wilderness to any other: rest assured that they were no worse than we are. They are an example to us of what our heart is; and whatever we see in them we have but to watch a little, and we shall see it all in ourselves. It was not Jewish nature that God proved in the wilderness so much as human nature at its very best estate. Assuredly, the tendency of human nature is to murmur. They murmured, complained, found fault. A very easy thing, for the very word "murmur," how simple it is, made up of two infantile sounds—*mur mur*. No sense in it, no wit in it, no thought in it; it is the cry rather of a brute than of a man—*murmur*, just a double groan. Easy is it for us to kick against the dispensations of God, to give utterance to our griefs, and, what is worse, to the inference we drew from them that God has forgotten to be gracious. To murmur is our tendency, but, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, do we mean to let the tendencies of the old nature rule us? Will we murmur? Oh that we might have grace rather to say with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" Shall a living man complain? Have we not received so much good from the hands of the Lord that we may well receive evil without rebellion? Will we not disappoint Satan, and overrule the tendency of the flesh, by saying in the might of God's Spirit, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?" I know we are apt to say, "Well, that is human nature;" and when we have said it is human nature, we suppose we have given a very excellent excuse for doing it. But is human nature to rule the divine nature? You, believer, profess to be a partaker of the divine nature. Let the superior force govern, let that which cometh from above

be uppermost, and put the lower nature down; let us ~~ev~~ chew murmurings and complainings, and magnify and adore the God who lays our comforts low.

Observe—and this is worthy of note—that the murmuring was not ostensibly against God. They murmured against Moses. And have you ever noticed how the most of us, when we are in a murmuring vein, are not honest enough to murmur distinctly against God. No; the child is dead, and we form a conjecture that there was some wrong treatment on the part of nurse, or surgeon, or ourselves; we lay our hold on that for which there may not be a shadow of proof, and the murmuring is upon that point. Or we have lost money, and have been brought down from opulence to almost poverty; then some one person was dishonest, a certain party betrayed us in a transaction, by failing to fulfil his part; all the murmuring is heaped upon that person. We deny, perhaps indignantly, that we murmur against God; and to prove it we double the zeal with which we murmur against Moses. To complain of the second cause is about as sensible as the conduct of the dog, which bites the stick with which it is beaten. It owes no anger to the stick, but to the person who uses it. “Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?” Whoever is the instrument, the Lord overrules. In our heart of hearts our rebellion is against the Lord himself. We have not quite honesty enough to rail against God openly and avowedly, and so we hypocritically cover up our repining against him, by murmuring against some person, occasion, or event. “If I had not happened to go out on such an occasion I might not have had that cold and been laid aside.” Thus we blame an accidental circumstance, as if it were not part of the divine arrangement. Is this complaining of the second cause, better than railing against God? I trow not, for in very deed, it is railing against God, and it is, in addition, an injustice to the second cause, so made a butt of. When Pharaoh bade the Israelites make bricks, and gave

them no straw, there was injustice ; but when the Israelites gathered around Moses and virtually told him that he ought to supply them with water, it was much the same thing. Whence should this man have water to give them to drink ? How could he sweeten Marah ? They knew right well that it was not possible for him to open a well for them in the wilderness ; they complained, I say, in their hearts, really against God, but they added to this the hypocrisy and the injustice of veiling their murmuring against the Most High by an unjust and clamorous complaint against his servant Moses. Stop thy tongue, my brother ; cease thy caviling against this and that, against him or her ; for be sure that thou art doing injustice to thy fellow-man as well as a wrong to thy God.

Once more, while we speak of this tendency in human nature, I want you to observe how they betrayed an utter unbelief of God. They said unto Moses, "What shall we drink ?" They meant by it, "By what means can God supply our want of water ?" What a question ! They were at the Red Sea, and God cleft the intervening gulf in twain, through the depths thereof they marched dryshod ; there is Marah's water—shall it be more difficult for God to purify than to divide ? To sweeten a fountain, is that more difficult than to cleave a sea ? Is anything too hard for the Lord ! A great miracle had been wrought ; had they but considered it, and exercised even the lowest degree of faith, they must have seen that he who could work such a miracle as they had seen, could work yet another ; and they might joyously have stood at Marah's brink, and have sung, "He who cast Pharaoh and his chosen captains into the Red Sea, and delivered his people, can give his chosen drink ; therefore sing we, Spring up, O well, and let thy waters be sweet and clean." Oh that they had faith in God but as a grain of mustard seed, and they would have seen great things and glorified his name. Do you blame them ? Do so ; blame them much, but include yourselves in the censure.

How often has it been so with us? We have said, "I will never distrust my God after this memorable deliverance, this singular display of his power has slain my unbelief;" yet a new trial has occurred, and our faith, where was it? Had the Son of Man himself been on the earth with those quick eyes to discern the faith which he himself creates, could he find faith in us in the hour of tribulation? Be humbled as ye see yourselves in this mirror. Behold your instability, which is as water. How like to reeds shaken with the wind are we; or like to meteors which flash across the brow of night, to leave the darkness denser than before. How soon is the glory of our confidence spent, and the excellence of our faith withered. Hold thou our feet in life great God, or we shall soon be silent in darkness.

III. Now, thirdly—and may divine help, the help of the Holy Ghost be given me—I will speak upon THE REMEDY OF GRACE. I have shown you the evils of the wilderness and the tendency of nature: it is delightful to behold the remedy of grace. First, if thou wouldst have Marah's bitterness healed, *take the case in prayer to God*. God begins by making us begin. The people complained to Moses; Moses took the complaint to his Master. In all trials, the surest way to a remedy is prayer. In heavenly pharmacy, prayer is a *catholicon*; it healeth all things. Prayer, which overcomes heaven, will certainly never be over-matched on earth. Neither men nor devils can stand against prayer: it smites them hip and thigh, like another Samson. The bow of prayer returns not empty; it is swifter than an eagle, it is stronger than a lion. Take thy case to God, O heir of trouble; unroll Rabshakch's letter before the Most High, and the Lord will silence his revilings. Half the work is done when it is brought before God in supplication,

Note, next, that *as soon as we have a prayer, God has a remedy*. The remedy is near at hand; but we do not per-

ceive it till it is shown us. "The Lord showed him a tree." The tree had been growing for years on purpose to be used. God has a remedy for all our troubles, before they happen to us. A delightful employment it is to notice how God forestalls himself; how long before we reach the encampment, if there be the bitter well, there is also the healing tree. All is ready between here and heaven. He that has gone to prepare a place for us by his presence, has prepared the way to that place for us by his providence. But, brethren, though for every trouble in this mortal life there is a remedy, you and I do not always discern it. "The Lord showed him a tree." I am persuaded that for every lock in Doubting Castle there is a key, but the promises are often in great confusion to our minds, so that we are perplexed. If a blacksmith should bring you his great bunch of picklocks, you would have to turn them over, over, and over, and try half of them, perhaps two-thirds, before you would find the right one; ay, and perhaps the right one would be left to the last. It is always a blessing to remember that for every affliction there is a promise in the word of God; a promise which meets the case, and was made on purpose for it. But you may not be always able to find it—no, you may go fumbling over the Scriptures long before you get the true word; but when the Lord shows it to you, when it comes with power to the soul, when the heart can grasp it, and cry, "Ay, that is the word, my Master; indeed and of a truth that is the precious truth which can sweeten my sad discomforts," oh, what a bliss it is! All glory be unto the Holy Ghost, who to this day is ever ready to show unto his praying servants the sweetening tree when they come to the bitter stream.

Now that remedy for the healing of Marah's water was *a very strange one*. Why should a tree sweeten the waters? I do not suppose there was any natural efficacy in the tree, although that would not be altogether impossible, since there are trees, so travellers tell us, which have been used

in the sweetening of waters. There is in South Africa a certain river, the water of which cannot be drunk until branches of a certain tree are placed in it, and then the bitterness which is in the stream is deposited at the bottom, and the water becomes drinkable. The thing is not unnatural, nor altogether necessarily supernatural, though I think in this case it was supernatural, for there are no trees found now in the wilderness of Shur that would have the effect of sweetening brackish waters. This was no doubt a miraculous incident, and it was also meant to teach us something. The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was eaten by our first parents and embittered all; there is a tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. Blessed is he that eats of this tree of life; it shall take away from him the bitterness which the first forbidden fruit brought into the world. A tree is a living thing: may we not learn that there are living principles in true religion, which will sweeten our adversities? Mere doctrines may not, but living principles will; these cast into our troubles will assuage our grief.

Best of all, may not this tree cut down be an emblem of the Saviour? A glorious tree indeed was he, with spreading branches, and top reaching to heaven—but he must suffer the axe for our sakes: and now, to—day, contemplating his atoning sacrifice, and by faith resting in him, the troubles of life and the troubles of death are sweetened by his dear cross, which, though it be a bitter tree in itself, is the antidote for all the bitterness that comes upon us here and hereafter.

That remedy was most effective. When they cut down the tree, and put it into the water, it turned the water sweet—they could drink of it; and let me assure you, that in the case of our trouble, the cross is a most effective sweetener. Shall I put the tree into the water for a minute, and then ask you to drink? Have you been suffering pain, or any other form of tribulation? I will lay the cross a—soak

in it for a minute, and your first reflection will be—"In all this that I am called to suffer, there is not even a single particle of punishment for my sin; God has punished Christ, consequently he cannot punish me: to punish two for one offence would be unjust, therefore there is nothing penal in all that I am suffering." I do not know of any reflection more consoling than this,—that my sorrow is not laid on me by a judge, nor inflicted on me as the result of divine anger. There is not a drop of wrath in a riverful of a believer's grief. Does not that take the bitterness out of affliction and make it sweet? And then the reflection goes further. Since Christ has died for me, I am God's dear child; and now if I suffer, all my suffering comes from my Father's hand—nay, more, from my Father's heart. He loves me, and therefore makes me suffer; not because he does not love, but because he does love, does he thus afflict me. In every stripe I see another token of paternal love. This it is to sweeten Marah's waters indeed.

Then will come the next reflection—that a Father's love is joined with infinite wisdom, and that, therefore, every ingredient in the bitter cup is measured out drop by drop, and grain by grain, and there is not one pang too many ever suffered by an heir of heaven. The cross is not only weighed to the pound, but to the ounce, ay, to the lowest conceivable grain. You shall not have one half a drop of grief more than is absolutely needful for your good and God's glory. And does not this also sweeten the cross, that it is laid on us by infinite wisdom, and by a Father's hand?

Ravishing, indeed, is the reflection in the midst of all our grief and suffering, that Jesus Christ suffers with us. In all thine affliction, O member of the body, the Head is still a sharer. Deep are the sympathies of the Redeemer, acute, certain, quick, infallible; he never forgets his saints.

All the while the Lord lays his chastening hand upon his servants, they may be cheered by this reflection—that

in this he is making them conformable unto Christ. What should they know of Gethsemane if they had no sweat of pain? What should they know of the passion, if they never had to cry, "I thirst," or "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" They were poor scholars in the school of Christ's sufferings, if they endured no sufferings themselves; and it is a blessed thing, a sweet thing to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism.

Moreover, when the child of God is in his right state, it is always enough for him that his condition is the result of his Father's will. Is it God's will? Is it Christ's will? Then it is my will. How could I dare to wish any thing to be otherwise than divine love appoints?

I do not know but what it will become sometimes to the Christian a subject of joy that Marah is bitter. For suppose Marah had been sweet, then Moses had not prayed to God, and then the tree had not been cut down, and they had never known the power of God to sweeten bitter waters. It must be an awful thing to live an unafflicted life on earth. You say it must be a very delightful thing. I have no doubt it may be from some aspects; but a person who has had no sickness, how can he have a sympathetic heart? What service can he render in cheering the people of God? If you never had any trials, I should suppose, unless something very extraordinary happened, that you would become harsh and untender; I am afraid some would grow brutal, coarse, hard of heart. Who wishes, where others have to suffer, to claim an immunity from a blessing which brings rich consolations with it, and works eternal benefits? Beloved, this is ever one thing that sweetens Marah that it afterwards bringeth forth the comfortable fruits of righteousness. Our trials are not sent to us alone and by themselves; there is a *quantum suff.* of grace sent with them, by which they are made available as means to sanctify us, and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I will not keep you much longer upon this point, but I must notice, that while I have shown you that the remedy is very efficacious, it is something more than efficacious : *it is transcendent*. The water was bitter, but it became absolutely sweet. The same water that was bitter became sweet, and the grace of God by leading us into contemplations that spring out of the cross of Christ, can make our trials themselves to become pleasant to us. It is a triumph of grace in the heart when we not only acquiesce in trouble, but even rejoice in it. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience." It is a grand thing when we can truly say that as to the rod of the covenant, we would not escape it if we might. It becomes in the judgment of wisdom so good a thing to be tried, that though we would not seek it, yet we accept it with something more than readiness, and the bitter thing becomes sweet to us.

Let me say, and have done with this part of the subject, that the remedy which is suggested to us by a spiritualizing of text, is efficacious for all trials, and will be found especially so for the bitter waters of death at the last. With all that can be said about death, it is not a pleasant subject for contemplation, and needs to be viewed in connection with covenant consolations. Certain brethren buoy themselves up with the hope of escaping death by the second Advent. I am not certain that they are wiser than David, who did not hope to omit the valley of the shadow of death, but trusted that he should fear no evil therein, because the rod and staff would be his stay. The death of Christ robs death of its terrors. The prospect of the resurrection and the certainty of immortality make us say, "Surely the bitterness of death is past!"

Be it remembered, that if the cross avails to sweeten all the bitterness of our mortal life, and even the last bitterness of death, it is assuredly available this morning to sweeten the bitterness of our present sorrow. Did you

drink the quassia-cup this morning before you came here? Do you feel desponding at this moment, my brother, my sister? Go to your Saviour at once, view him suffering on your behalf, behold the completion of your reconciliation to God, mark the security of your soul through the finished work of your glorious Surety, take down your harps from the willows, put away your ashes, ask the Lord to anoint you with the oil of joy instead of mourning, and even at the waters of Marah lift up your song again, and let the timbrel still be heard. "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: Marah's bitterness hath he turned to sweetness, he hath cut down the mighty tree which he gave for us, and which yielded itself to the axe for us, and into the bitter stream the tree is cast and now henceforth, O Marah, thou art sweet indeed." Did you come here this morning as Naomi when she returned to her city and said, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me"? Ah, when she dandled on her knee and held in her fond bosom the child of Ruth and Boaz, the joy of her old age, she was glad to think the neighbors had not changed her name, and she was willing enough to be called Naomi still. Call not yourself Marah, but remember the new name which the Lord hath named upon you. The bitter pool itself, call it not Marah; be not so ready to affix names of sad memorials: your griefs are apt enough to gall your memory; do not aid them to sting you. Call the well by another name; forget Marah, and remember Jehovah Rophi, "the Lord that healeth," both "thee" and the waters. Record the mercy rather than the sorrow, and give thanks to the Most High.

Now, in closing, somebody will say, "This is a very curious missionary sermon." Yes, but you see I did not appoint the missionary sermon for to-day: my brethren did that, and certainly I did not arrange my own sickness, so as to make it fall on this day. How can I dance to the sound

of the timbrel when I am feeble and sad? If I had the choosing of my own state of health and mind, I would have the choosing of my own texts, and make them always suitable to the occasions as they arise; but I am obliged to preach what I can preach, and as I know pretty well the flavor of Marah, and a little about the sweetness which the healing tree can give it, I can only tell you what I know by experience.

But it is a good missionary sermon for all that. Let us show you how. Here is a SUGGESTION OF COMPASSION.

Brethren, all the world over, the heathen have trials, bitternesses, woes. I said that Christians have peculiar woes, but the dark places of the earth have direr sorrows. Some nations are devastated with war; others are tormented with diabolical customs and rites: their actions even towards themselves through their superstition are brutal. I may well liken the world that lieth in darkness to a thirsty caravan gathered around Marah's well where the water is too bitter to drink. Oh, the woes, the woes of mankind! High are the Andes, lofty the Himalayas, but the woes of the sons of Adam are higher, huger still. The Ganges and the Indus, and other mighty streams, pour their floods into the ocean; but what mighty deep could contain the torrents of human grief? A very deluge is the sorrow as well as the sin of man. And, my brethren, the heathen know nothing of the healing tree, the tree cut down of old, which still hath power to sweeten mortal misery. You know it, you have your trials, and you surmount them by the appeals you make to your Lord, and by the power of his consolations; but alas! these sons of darkness have your griefs, and more, but they have not your Comforter. For them the deluge, but not the ark; for them the tempest, but not the refuge. And you are so sure that you have that which would cheer them; no doubt passes across your mind as to the gospel. These are wavering times in which some professors, and even some teachers, almost believe that the gospel is but one theory

of many, and will have to stand its test, and, in all probability, will fail, as many human systems of thought have done. You think not so ; you believe that God's gospel is a verity, a revelation of Jehovah. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not his word, his Christ, his decree, his covenant. You know that you have a tree that can heal the bitter fountains. No doubt comes across your mind as to that : what then? By common humanity, much more by the tender movements of the grace of God upon your souls, I conjure you present this remedy to those who need it, and who need it so much. Will any thing suffice as a substitute for it? Is there anywhere on earth another healing tree beside that which fell beneath the axe at Calvary? Are there other leaves for the healing of the nations? On the seven-hilled city of Rome, grows there a tree that can heal man's diseases? No; it is a deadly upas. Cut it down, and burn the very roots thereof. Amongst the fancies of idolatry are there any inventions of man that can cool his fevered brow and soothe his griefs? Does Mohammedanism offer hopes for eternity that can light up the grave to an awakened sinner? Are there thoughts of bliss in idolatry calculated to cheer the sepulchre? All religions answer, "Comforts are not in us." It is only at the cross, it is only by Jesus crucified that the world can be healed. Hitherto little has been accomplished compared with our desires ; and in contrast to our ambitions, next to nothing ; but faith, darting beyond the things that are seen, flying into the presence-chamber of God, can behold him writing with the eternal pen, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God ;" and she is sure that the tree will sweeten the waters yet. Come, brethren, let your faith prove itself by your works. Help to-day—to-day, by your gifts ; help to-morrow,—to-morrow by your prayers. Help, some of you, by consecrating yourselves to mission labor. There is a prayer I mean to continue to offer until it is answered, that God would pour out on this church a missionary spirit. I want to see our young men devoting themselves to

the work, some that will not be afraid to venture and preach Jesus Christ in the regions beyond. I have not much faith in missionary societies ; it gets less, I must protest, each year ; yet we must never put aside one instrumentality until we have a better ready. If the Lord would send the living fire through the churches of England, if he would send from on high a divine impulse, we should see starting up here and there men who would say : "Here are we : send us." The Spirit of God will say, "Separate me Paul and Barnabas for the work," and when this is done I look to see far happier days.

We have sweetened the waters a little ; no more the suttee burns ; the African is free ; the slave-ship crosses no more the deep. In some regions exterminating wars have ceased ; the white dove of peace flies where the raven of war was seen. Glory be to God ! A few leaves cast into the waters have done this. Let us bear a whole Christ and a whole gospel amongst the nations, and lay the tree in this Marsh, until at last the whole world shall drink of the sweet waters of divine love, and God shall be all in all. God bless you, beloved, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE

SERMON XXIII.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE.

This sermon was delivered in connection with the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, at Cambridge, in 1870. It was an open air sermon suggested by the siege of Paris, and the attempts to obtain terms of peace.

“PREACHING PEACE BY JESUS CHRIST: (HE IS LORD OF ALL)” —Acts x. 36.

THESE words were addressed to an admirable congregation, all met with an earnest purpose, all conscious that they were in the presence of God, all like soil that had been ploughed and prepared for the good seed. Happy preacher to have such a congregation. God make this congregation to be of the same sort. The preacher also was a right faithful messenger from heaven. No sooner did Peter know that he was commissioned to the Gentile centurion and his household, than he came to his house ; and when he found himself surrounded by the family and their friends, he girt up his loins for his work, and gave his whole soul to his subject. Peter goes straight to his business ; there is no beating about the bush, no prefatory apology, but he begins to preach Jesus Christ, spoken of by prophets, seen by apostles, hanged on a tree, and risen again on the third day. It is well when the preacher feels that preaching is no mere display, and is not intended to be an opportunity for him to show how excellent an orator he can be. The true ambassador for Christ feels that he himself stands before God, and has to deal with souls in God's stead as God's servant, and therefore has no time for considering the graces of oratory and the tricks of rhetoric, but must speak from his inmost soul the word of the Lord. Every preacher stands in a sol-

emn place—a place in which unfaithfulness is inhumanity to man as well as treason to God. To be false to our charge will cast us into the deepest condemnation; to be hurled from a pulpit into hell will be to perish indeed. See ye, then, that both the congregation and the preacher are peculiarly in God's presence in their solemn assemblies, and should feel and act accordingly. Pray ye for us and for yourselves that we both may so behave before the Lord, that our assembling together may not increase our sin, but may prove to be a rich and lasting blessing.

We have in the text before us the subject upon which Peter treated in his sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He seems to have taken it for granted that men are at war with God, that even the attentive congregation before him, though consisting of the best of men, were by nature at enmity with their Maker. He speaks therefore as an ambassador desirous of establishing a better state of things, and tells them that he has come to preach peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. I shall at this time try to follow his example, and though I cannot do so with equal steps, yet have I in my bosom the same earnest desire for the souls of my hearers as the apostle had. I pray that all of you may be brought to peace with God through Jesus Christ.

First, this evening, I shall give some *reasons why those of you who are not reconciled to God should desire peace with him.* When we have weighed these I shall, secondly, *endeavor to negotiate the terms of peace,* and then, thirdly, we shall lay before you *a claim or proclamation,* which is publicly asserted, and to be universally maintained, namely, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

I. To begin, then, I shall endeavor to offer to the unconverted REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD DESIRE TO BE AT PEACE.

May I not urge, as the first reason, that *it is not commendable to be at enmity with any of the wise and good.* It is best to be at peace with all men, but it is incumbent upon

us to be in friendship with holy men. I should deeply regret to have any one for my enemy, but if he were a godly person I should consider it a calamity. If the angels of heaven were opposed to us it would have an ill look, those holy beings would not needlessly take umbrage ; but when it comes to opposition to the infinitely good, just and holy God, who in his right mind can do other than bewail it, and desire to see it ended by a gracious peace ? Strife against evil, injustice, and tyranny is honorable, but to contend with uprightness, goodness, and holiness is deplorable. No possible benefit can arise from a conflict in which we are on the wrong side. If God be for us, none can successfully fight against us, but to have God opposed to us is in itself the chief of evils. My hearer, " Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto thee."

The second reason ought to have weight with every honest man, it is this, that *the war in which you are engaged is an unjust one.* It never ought to have been begun, there was never any justifiable cause for its outbreak ; God was unjustly and wickedly assailed by his ungrateful creature. What ought never to have been begun had better be dropped as soon as possible. Sin is war against right, against love, against happiness. Transgression of God's law is a transgression of commands most equitable and beneficent. To love evil is dishonorable, wrong, unfair, unjust, and the conscience of man tells him it is so. To be at war with God is to fight against truth and justice, and to contend for falsehood, unholiness, injustice, unrighteousness. When men love that which is right, and good, and true, and yield themselves up to God's will, then the war is over ; but inasmuch as the war against God consists in our doing the wrong, and loving the wrong, and thinking the wrong, and clinging to the wrong, such a war, in the very nature of things, ought to come to a close. May the Holy Spirit set this in its true colors, and convince every one of you that

not to love God is the most shameful of evils, the most detestable of enormities. How can it ever be justifiable for the creature to contend against the Creator? Shall the clay rise against the potter? Will it ever become a right thing for children to rebel against their parents? The ox fed at the stall will serve its owner; shall it be right that we, being fed by God, should yet refuse him our service? The natural order of the relationship between us and our Creator involves in all justice that we should be conformed to his will. O men, will ye choose the ways and wages of unrighteousness, and cover yourselves with confusion? Would God there were in you an honest judgment to judge uprightly. Besides, what evil hath our Creator done us that we should go to war against him? What quality is there in him that we ought to hate? What is there that we can justly challenge in the character of God which might righteously provoke our antagonism? Is he not kindness itself? Doth he not overflow with loving-kindness? Sends he not his rain upon the just and upon the unjust? Doth he not command his sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good? Hath he not sent us fruitful seasons, and kept his covenant, that day and night, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, should not cease? For which of these things should we rebel against him? Some of you are possessed of riches; should you for that cause forget the God that gave them to you? Others of you are in sound, robust health; should you violate the commands of him who gives you this choicest of blessings? We appeal to you, men and brethren, wherefore are you at war with your God? If he were a cruel tyrant, if he were unjust, if he trod you beneath his feet, if his government were malicious and degrading, I could understand your warfare, but it is an evil, an unjust, a villainous war, because the Lord is full of mercy and his name is love. Oh that men would end their rebellion at this hour, while we summon them to do so in the name of God! Eternal Spirit, convince them of sin, of

righteousness, and of judgment to come, and lead them to the peace-speaking blood.

A third argument for ending the war may be drawn from the fact that he who began it has been terribly defeated, and is at this moment a prisoner. He who began the war is Satan, the arch-enemy. Our first parents did not first rebel; man was the dupe of an older rebel. Apollyon, once an angel, conceived ambitious thoughts, and would fain have become equal with his Maker, but he was banished from heaven by just decree, and then resorting to this lower region, sought out our mother Eve, and seduced our race, hoping to maintain the war against the Lord of Hosts by inciting us to cast off our allegiance. Little has he gained by this stratagem, overwhelming has been his defeat. Hurled from the battlements of heaven at first, he has worn his chain wearily these many years, seeking rest and finding none, dreading that day of wrath when he shall be dragged at the chariot wheels of our divine Redeemer, and then consigned to the hell of old prepared for him. Jesus who once was slain, has led captivity captive. He whose heel was bitten by the old dragon has broken the serpent's head. Revolt, O man, against the prince of the power of the air; follow him no longer; take up arms against the demon monarch; refuse henceforth to follow his beck and call. What right has the devil to reign over you? He neither made you, preserved you, or blessed you; evil only, and that continually, will he do unto you. Strike for your freedom, strike at once, and shake off his galling yoke. For him the everlasting fire has been prepared: why must you needs share it? The wages of sin will be death; why continue in so unprofitable a service? May God grant that you may escape the wrath to come that knows no end, by turning against your old master and enlisting beneath the banner of your Saviour. Down with the black, sin-stained, sulphureous colors, and run up the red cross. Exchange the black Diabolus for the fair Immanuel, and peace shall come unto you.

These are three good reasons, but there are many others, and among them is this one—the *force which is brought against you it is utterly impossible for you effectually to resist*. It is well when we contemplate warfare to sit down and see whether we are equal to the combat. What man is he that with one thousand can meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Now, consider ye this, ye that forget God. If ye oppose God, with whom is it that ye set yourselves in battle array? Can your puny arm hope to rival the right hand of Jehovah? Canst thou thunder with a voice like his? Were he a creature like yourselves, you might hope for victory. Were he limited in any degree, you might summon all your strength and hold out in the day of conflict; but who can contend against Omnipotence? Who shall stand against the Almighty God? As well might the fly hope to quench the sun when he has already burned up his wings in a candle! As well might you seek to dry up the Atlantic, or bid Niagara leap up the rock instead of down! As well might you hope to stay the moon in its course, or to pluck the stars from their places, as think to stand against God! Nay, if you had all heaven and earth and hell beneath your feet, yet could God overcome you, for he hath made all these things, and can overthrow both them and you with his mere will. Let not the wax contend with the fire, nor the stubble with the flame. Let not man, who is but nothingness, think that he can contend with his Maker. You know already how foolish it is to strive against the natural laws of God, and you will find it equally so to contend against his moral government. A man stands in the way of a steam engine rushing on at express speed; he knows that according to the laws of nature its weight and velocity effectually prevent his staying its course; do you call it courage on his part that he stands on the track and defies the iron horse? It is not courage, it is foolhardiness, it is madness, it is suicide. Yet this is nothing in comparison to what you are doing in placing yourself in opposition to

the Lord. God will not alter his laws for you. Why should he? They are just and right, wherefore should he change them? Fire will burn, and if a drunken madcap persists in thrusting his arm between the bars of a furnace, shall fire cease from its nature to secure him immunity from his folly? If a man expose himself to the rush of an avalanche, can he expect the rolling mass to suspend itself in mid air for him? If a mariner will go to sea in a vessel worm-eaten and unseaworthy, will the waves pity the bark and cease from their rough play and rougher warfare? No, they roll around the leaking craft as they would have done around a better vessel; they toss it, they sink it; the careless mariner perishes. If a man will act contrary to natural laws, he must suffer for it. If you dash your head against a granite rock it will not for your sake soften into down; and it is just so with the moral laws of God's government; certain results follow from sinful courses of action, inevitably and as a matter of course. Yield, then, to the divine wisdom which has rightly ordained the consequences of sin. Do not necessitate your own destruction. Submit freely where rebellion is absurd. Against Omnipotence it were folly to strive; be wise, then, and submit to the power of the omnipotent God.

E Further, remember that *any resistance which you may be able to offer to the Lord your God will be carried on at a very fearful price.* You will have to bear the expenses of the war which you foolishly prolong. All the time that you resist the Almighty you are doing it at your own risk and hazard. And what is that risk and hazard? Why this, that even if you should yield to him ultimately, so as to be saved, you will regret these sins and these rebellions as long as you live. Even when they are forgiven, your iniquities will be a source of perpetual regret to you, they will be a source of danger and weakness to you as long as you live, for though God heals the wounds of our sin, we shall carry the scars even to our graves. Moreover, if you should never receive the saving mercy of God, remember, these rebellions of yours are

noted against you, and when the Great Judge comes to deal with you and lay his justice to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, for all this you will have to give an account, for all this God will levy his distrains upon you, and you shall be made to feel the weight of his terrible hand of vengeance.

Furthermore, let me remind you of one thing else, namely, that your total defeat is absolutely certain sooner or later. No man ever did set himself against God and prosper for long. His patience suffereth long and is kind, but there is an end to it. Look at Pharaoh. If ever a man defied God thoroughly, it was that king of Egypt. "Who is the Lord," said he, "that I should obey him?" He bore up against warnings and actual plagues; each time when he was broken down he defied the Lord again as soon as the pressure of trouble was removed; but when he fancied that the infinite God had emptied out his quiver, he found to his cost that there was yet another arrow left, and that a deadly shaft which would lodge in his heart and lay him prostrate. He said in his heart, "I have outlived the plague of the locusts, I have outlived the lightnings, and the darkness, and the murrain that fell upon men and beasts, who is Jehovah that I should care for any further plagues? I will defy him to do his worst, and fight on to the bitter end." As he dashes along in his war chariots, with his mighty hosts at his side, hastening to pursue the captives who are fleeing from him, he fancies himself to be omnipotent, but when he finds his wheels dragging heavily in the depths of the sea, he turns to flee from the face of the Lord. All too late was his flight, for God gave the word, and the liquid walls which erst had stood like solid masonry, leaped down upon him, and then the haughty king knew that Jehovah could vanquish the proud, and put down the stout-hearted. For this cause was he raised up, that he might be a standing testimony to all generations that whosoever rebelleth against the Lord shall meet with a final and irretrievable overthrow.

O sinner, thy fate may not be to be drowned in the Red Sea, but worse than that, thou wilt be shut in forever where hope is shut out, and where misery abounds. The punishment of lost souls will prove to them, beyond all controversy, that it is a futile, a bitter, a horrible thing, to be at war with the Lord of hosts. None can endure the terror of Jehovah's wrath; wherefore is it that they so lightly dare to provoke it? Yield thee, man: it were folly to stand out against God; thou canst not hope to win. Sue thou for peace to-night, and may God send it thee. Without such peace your future is darkened with thick clouds, and the presages of an horrible tempest. The Lord most surely cometh, and at his coming woe will be the portion of his enemies.

“At his presence nature shakes,
 Earth affrighted hastes to flee,
 Solid mountains melt like wax,
 What will then become of thee?
 Who his advent may abide?
 You that glory in your shame,
 Will you find a place to hide
 When the world is wrapt in flame?”

Let me tell thee (and this is the gladdest note that is in my heart at this hour), let me tell thee *it will be altogether to thine advantage to be at peace with God.* It will be for thy present happiness, it will be for thy eternal welfare. A soul at war with God is also opposed to its own best interests, but a heart that has yielded to divine love, that has cast down its weapons, that has closed in with divine mercy, is a soul at peace, at rest, a soul that is ready for joy on earth, and for bliss unspeakable above. Were there no hereafter, it is profitable even for this present life to have God for our friend; but when we think of the eternal future, even the most superficial consideration suffices to convince us of the urgent necessity of being reconciled to God. Be wise and consider then, take advice and do that which will be most gainful to

thee—namely, seek peace, and yield to Christ who is Lord of all. Meanwhile, my heart's desire and prayer for thee is that thou mayest be saved, and to that end may the Holy Ghost visit thee, soften thy heart, guide thy judgment, and direct thy will, so that Jesus may henceforth be thine, and be thy peace.

II. Now I shall turn, in the second place, to DECLARE THE TERMS ON WHICH PEACE MAY BE NEGOTIATED. I come with a white flag to-night. I ask for a parley, an armistice, a truce. God, meanwhile, holds back his thunderbolts, and bids the sinner live while mercy is proclaimed to him. Wouldst thou have peace, then? Art thou in earnest for friendship with thy God? Then learn that first of all the great *sine qua non* is, that peace be made through an ambassador nominated of God, namely, his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Here, in the text, it says, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." There will be no peace between God and any man who despises the person, name and work of Jesus Christ. Reject that name, and there is no other whereby you can be saved. This is the foundation for peace which was laid of old, and other foundation can no man lay. Hear thou, then, and let all difficulty vanish from thy mind, while we speak of that excellent, that all-glorious Person whom the Lord has set forth as heaven's Plenipotentiary, the Ambassador of the Eternal. This Jesus Christ is God himself—God over all, blessed forever; knowing the mind of God, and able to negotiate with Divine authority. But he is also man—man such as thou art—man of the substance of his mother, most truly and really man, and, therefore, he is fitted to deal graciously with man. Oh, then, because he is thy brother, accept him as ambassador. He is fit to be a daysman, and an arbitrator, and a mediator, since he has sympathy with thee, and yet has equality with God. If you yourself had the choice of an umpire you could not select one so every way fitted for the office. His love to you, his good-will to

our poor fallen race, his assumption of our nature, his death in mortal form, all should lead you to commit your case into his faithful hands. God lead thee to do so at once, for the matter is urgent.

Now further, concerning the negotiation, I would say to thee, O enemy of God, that the great difficulty is put away which might have prevented peace between thee and God; for the justice of God which thou hast provoked has been satisfied by Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus has made recompense for the injury done by human sin. There is no difficulty now on God's part; no difficulty in forgiving any sinner that believes in Jesus Christ. Thy sin was a great stone which lay at the door, but it is rolled away because Jesus died; let that comfort thee. If thou art anxious to have peace, God's terms are these (I call them terms for want of a better word, but I mean no legality thereby); he asks no price of thee, he demands no millions of money, nay, he demands no pounds at thine hands. If thou hadst the wealth of the Indies, the Lord would despise such a bribe. If he were hungry, he would not tell thee; if he were thirsty he would not come to thee for drink; for Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice. He asks no gold from thee, he asks no suffering from thee, no passing through dreary penance, or horrible despairing. It would be no satisfaction to him to see thee suffer. He delights in happiness, he is pleased to see us happy when it is safe for others that we should be so. Neither does he ask thee to achieve merits to bring to him. Thou couldst not if he should demand it. Thou hast sinned before and will sin again. All hope for thee to make up the faultiness of the past by the perfection of the future is gone. Thou hast broken the law—thou canst not keep it. If thou wilt labor after life under the covenant of works, thou must perish. God, therefore, does not ask thee to save thyself by thine own works, but he graciously tells thee that he is full of mercy, full of compassion, delighting to forgive, ready to

pass by thy sins, and that at once. Here is all that the Lord asks of thee, and this he will enable thee to do—*trust unfeignedly in his only-begotten Son*. On the cross Jesus suffered: turn thine eyes to that cross. He rose again, he ascended to heaven: trust him to save thy soul, because he ever liveth to make intercession for thee.

"All the *doing* is completed,

Now 'tis 'look, believe, and live;'

None can purchase his salvation,

Life's a gift that God must *give*;

Grace, through righteousness, is reigning,

Not of works, lest man should boast;

Man must take the mercy freely,

Or eternally be lost."

Then down with thy weapons of rebellion; surrender them, confess that thou hast erred, confess it in thy Father's own bosom. Conscious of his love, be conscious of thy sin. Confess that thou hast done wrong. "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord." Nurture not within thy bosom the viper that will be thy destruction. Pluck it out and hurl it from thee in the strength of him that died to save thee.

Now, is this hard? Are these severe demands? Is it a hardship to confess the wrong which thou hast done? Is that too much? Is it not reasonable that thou shouldst do it? Thou canst not be healed, and continue to wound thyself. How canst thou hope that the poison will be extracted from thy veins while thou dost continue to drink it? Nay, man, look to the cross, and hate thy sin, for sin nailed the Well-beloved to the tree. Look up to the cross, and thou wilt kill sin; for the strength of Jesus' love will make thee strong to put down thy tendencies to sin. Well, but, sayest thou, "Is there nothing for me to bring, nothing for me to do?" Answer, "There is nothing for thee to bring, there is nothing for thee to do, but there is much for thee to take—for thou hast to receive Jesus as thine all in all."

It is thy duty to throw down thy weapons of rebellion, and to say this afternoon, "Great God I yield ; my wanderings now are at an end. I yield my soul to thee, Jesus ; come and save me. And when thou hast saved me, help me to obey thee. Behold, I give myself up to thee. Infinite mercy of God, receive me ; precious blood of Jesus, cleanse me ; Holy Spirit, sanctify me ; God my creator, new create me ; Jesus, lover of my soul, teach my soul to love thee." In this way peace is found, even peace through Jesus Christ.

III. And now, thirdly, and to conclude. I have to make public a CLAIM which Peter made on this occasion, when he spoke to Cornelius and his kinsfolk.

I have a claim which ought to be urged wherever the gospel is preached. "He is the Lord of all." This means, first, that Jesus Christ who died on Calvary, is in the mediatorial kingdom, which his Father has given him, Lord of all mankind. He is Lord not of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile ; not of one race and nation, but of all the tribes of Adam born. "He is Lord of all." Remember that text : "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The great object of Christ's mediatorial kingdom is the salvation of the elect ; but in order to compass that grand result, power is given to Christ over all flesh, that is, over all mankind ; and this last truth is the reason why we are enabled honestly to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven. Because Christ has power over all flesh, we preach the gospel to all flesh. Because he is Lord of all, we are permitted to preach the gospel to all, and say to all who come within its hearing, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." Sons of men, the Son of God is King over you. You are not ruled to-day so much by the iron sceptre of an absolute God as by the silver sceptre of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. You are under his government to-day. You may

hate him, you may rail against him, but, "I will declare the decree," says the psalmist, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." The heathen rage, the princes take counsel together, but the Lord hath made Jesus Christ the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and under his reign we dwell. This is a most gladsome truth, for thus we live under the reign of sovereign mercy, under the reign of the incarnate God, Immanuel, God with us. Look, O sinner! You needed a Mediator between you and God, and Jesus stands in that place. You want no Mediator between you and Christ; approach him as you are, and his gracious heart will gladly receive you. You cannot come to God as King except through a Mediator, but you have to deal with Christ, and may deal with him now. Come to him. You want no one to introduce you. Come just as you are. Oh, may his blessed Spirit sweetly incline you to come and "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

The text, by declaring the reigning power of the Lord Jesus, shows us most encouragingly the most solid of reasons for yielding to him our trust and obedience. If he be Lord of all, if all things be put under him, then I may with safety rely upon him. This is the Man, the exalted Man, whom we unseen adore, of whom it is written, "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." Now, the apostle rightly enough says, "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." He is reigning on high in heaven, and it is ordained that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Oh, then trust him, for all power is his. He is exalted on high to give repent-

ance and remission of sins. All his power is linked with mercy. Grace perfumes all his attributes.

Because Jesus is Lord, I pray you my fellow-men to yield him reverence and serve him. Obey him, for he is your liege Lord and Sovereign. It ought to be the easier to obey him because he is numbered with the human race. The old history which we learned when we were children told us that the Welsh could not bear the yoke of an English king. They wanted to have a prince born in their own country; and, therefore, their English conqueror brought before them his own son, born in their own Principality, and they accepted him as Prince of Wales. God reigneth over us, but that we may love his reign he has anointed his own Son our own Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus the infinite deigned to be an infant; he who sustains all things was laid upon a woman's breast. There is no man more a man than Jesus, and yet in no respect is he other than equal with God. Let us then accept the rule of Jesus. This is the ladder that Jacob saw, the bottom of which rests on the earth, near to you—your feeble feet may reach it; but the top doth reach to heaven, and now between earth and heaven, between man and God, there is a ladder that never can be broken, by which sinners may ascend to the glory of God. Oh, love him, then; with all your hearts cherish the name and honor of the incarnate God, Immanuel. Because he is so unspeakably glorious and gracious, serve him with joy and gladness.

Be it also known that Jesus the Saviour must be received as Lord in the souls of those whom he redeems. You must obey him if you trust him, or else your trust will be mere hypocrisy. If we trust a physician, we follow his prescriptions; if we trust a guide, we follow his directions, and if we fully rely on Jesus, we obey his gracious commands. The faith which saves is a faith which produces a change of life, and subdues the soul to obedience to the Lord. Be not deceived: where Jesus comes he

comes to reign. Without submission to his will and word, you are without the safety of his atonement. The ship is saved from the rock because it obeys the pilot's hand as he moves the helm ; if it were untrue to the steerage it would perish with the best of helmsmen on board. It is most just that he who bought us, sought us, found us, saved us, and preserves us should have our loving allegiance, and so assuredly it must be, or no peace can be established between us, and God. Let us welcome his sway and pray him to exert his power. Be this our daily prayer :

" Almighty King of saints,
 These tyrant lusts subdue :
 Drive the old serpent from his seat,
 And all my powers renew.
 This done, my cheerful voice
 Shall loud hosannas raise ;
 My soul shall glow with gratitude,
 My lips proclaim thy praise."

And lastly, let me say, I do not put this to you as a matter of choice as to whether you will or will not submit to the will of God and seek reconciliation with him ; neither do I speak with bated breath when, as a herald, I hereby proclaim Jesus to be both Lord and God ; but in the name of him that liveth and was dead and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death—I say, in his name, I demand of you that you obey him, and receive him as the Christ of God. Yield yourselves to him who is Lord of all. Do you refuse the summons that I give you now as his officer this day ? Then take heed what you do, for as the Lord liveth you shall answer for this in the great day of his appearing. Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which crucified him, and you who despise him must be judged by him. If you reject him you shall nevertheless see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and dead. I say, again, then, I come not to you

to flatter and deceive you, I come not to plead with you as though my Lord and Master were on equal terms with you. He summons you to surrender, he bids you throw down your arms and accept his mercy. He is not afraid of your opposition, neither does he need your friendship. It is his grace which leads him to invite you to peace. He condescends to treat thus with you whom he might have sent into hell with one word of his lips years ago. If you refuse him you shall answer for it. On your heads shall be your own blood; and in that day when heaven and earth shall pass away like a scroll, you without a shelter, you without an advocate, you without an excuse, shall be banished from his presence to endure the wrath of God. The Lord grant of his mercy that not one of you may stand out against him; but this night, ere another sun rises, may there be peace established on a sure footing between you and God, for Christ is our peace. May you take him and trust him, and be reconciled to God; and to God shall be the glory forever and forever. Amen and Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

JESUS ONLY.

"AND WHEN THEY HAD LIFTED UP THEIR EYES, THEY SAW NO MAN, SAVE JESUS ONLY."—Matthew xvii. 8.

THE last words will suffice us for a text, "Jesus only." When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, "Master, it is good to be here," as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets ; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples ; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter, was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting society of "Jesus only." Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with "Jesus only," which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Je-

Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious, and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendor. "Jesus only," is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. "Jesus only," as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body, than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of "Jesus only," we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice *what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration*; we shall then dwell on *what did happen*; and then, thirdly, we shall speak on *what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day*.

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things, either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, *they might have seen nobody* with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses, no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away;

like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! for those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone, and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God, for a while delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses, nor Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only

with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel and perceives not its reality ; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times ; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles ; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, any thing for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and the spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be revered, all to be respected, but nothing more ; there is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century ; we have got beyond all that. Ah ! brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms ; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other hand, say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church ; we have seen him, though not with eyes ; we have heard him, though not with ears ; we have grasped him, though not with hands ; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We

have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succors. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Saviour. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes *they might have seen Moses only*. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for men of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Saviour's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet, dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world,

and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day; after the clear revelations of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts; yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows—a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not “Jesus only,” but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fulness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness, and, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfulfiller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary, where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh, how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where "Jesus only" speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken

tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see "Jesus only."

But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, *they might have seen Elijah only*. Instead of the gentle Saviour, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God's own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, "Command fire from heaven," Elias would have consumed his foes; the Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end; Herod's blood, like Ahab's, would have been licked up by dogs; and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Saviour of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the

prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to "Jesus only." I am not myself fond of even using the term "preparing for Christ," for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith—a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! how many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longing, and go no further. They never get so far as to behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah's challenge, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;" but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Saviour. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you (ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Saviour is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration.

doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. "Jesus only" is the way, the truth, and the life. "Jesus only" is the sinner's Saviour. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see "Jesus only."

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another : a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes—*they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus*, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege ! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes ! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humble spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiring ? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success ? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see "Jesus only," as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star ; all those guardians and comforters of the night have disappeared ; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the moon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses ? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in Jesus ; the law is honored and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in "Jesus only." And why should I wish to retain Elias ? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the prepara-

tion of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in "Jesus only." It is better to see Moses and Elias *in* Christ, than to see Moses and Elias *with* Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie's English Grammar, or a Mavor's Spelling Book, or a Henry's First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath-day, because all

Sabbath in heaven. Thus, you see, the losing of some things is gain : it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel ! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ himself. Like the traveller ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc ; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one horn among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains ; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mount Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase ; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only !"

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.” This was all they wanted to see for their comfort. They were sore afraid : Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort ; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word ; yet when Jesus said, “ Be not afraid,” their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, nor to prophecy : go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the *Saviour* they wanted. Those three men all needed washing from sin ; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did ; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah ! brethren, all the Saviour we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us thir services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke ! But we thank God we have seen “ Jesus only,” and if Moses has gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. “ Jesus only,” is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a Master. “ No man can serve two masters,” and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower’s mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain ; in the day of difficulty, enough for their direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God ; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield, “ One is our Master,” and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as *their power* for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven: Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. "Jesus only." Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffer's fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ must constrain us, and we shall thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." In the point of motive, believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished, will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honor him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name.

JESUS ONLY.

Here is a stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, "Jesus only." Brethren, it is all the *gospel* we have to preach—it is all the gospel we want to preach—it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion, even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach to-day what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the gospel towers above the wrecks of time: to us "Jesus only" remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else.

For "Jesus only" shall be *our reward*, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant that we may have a fulness of this, and "Jesus only" shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought, than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw "Jesus only," they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I fain would linger. Brethren, let us think of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be "Jesus only." I believe that whenever

our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments rich, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only, other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that any thing which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the region of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian.

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humilia-

tion of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Saviour. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat ; it nailed him to the cross ; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani ;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." You will best read your interest in Christ, by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it ? but I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it ? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the

world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Saviour, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptizied ; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved. You see it is not by looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fulness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary ! There is life in a look at him ! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet "Jesus only" shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, "Jesus only." May God bless you for the sake of "Jesus only." Amen.

SERMON XXV.

REST, REST.

"COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU, AND LEARN OF ME; FOR I AM MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART; AND YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY, AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.—Matthew xi. 28-30.

WE have oft repeated those memorable words, and they have brought us much comfort; but it is possible that we may never have looked deeply into them, so as to have seen the fulness of their meaning. The works of man will seldom bear close inspection. You shall take a needle which is highly polished, which appears to be without the slightest inequality upon its surface, and you shall put it under a microscope, and it will look like a rough bar of iron; but you shall select what you will from nature, the bark or the leaf of a tree, or the wing or the foot of an insect, and you shall discover no flaw, magnify it as much as you will, and gaze upon it as long as you please. So take the words of man. The first time you hear them they will strike you; you may hear them again and still admire their sentiment, but you shall soon weary of their repetition, and call them hackneyed and over-estimated. The words of Jesus are not so, they never lose their dew, they never become threadbare. You may ring the changes upon his words, and never exhaust their music: you may consider them by day and by night, but familiarity shall not breed contempt. You shall beat them in the mortar of contemplation, with the pestle of criticism, and their

perfume shall but become the more apparent. Dissect, investigate, and weigh the Master's teaching word by word, and each syllable will repay you. When loitering upon the Island of Liddo, off Venice, and listening to the sound of the city's bells, I thought the music charming as it floated across the lagoon; but when I returned to the city, and sat down in the centre of the music, in the very midst of all the bells, the sweetness changed to a horrible clash, the charming sounds were transformed into a maddening din; not the slightest melody could I detect in any one bell, while harmony in the whole company of noisemakers was out of the question. Distance had lent enchantment to the sound. The words of poets and eloquent writers may, as a whole, and heard from afar, sound charmingly enough; but how few of them bear a near and minute investigation! Their belfry rings passably, but one would soon weary of each separate bell. It is never so with the divine words of Jesus. You hear them ringing from afar and they are sweetness itself. When as a sinner, you roamed at midnight like a traveller lost on the wilds, how sweetly did they call you home! But now you have reached the house of mercy, you sit and listen to each distinct note of love's perfect peal, and wonderingly feel that even angelic harps cannot excel it.

We will, this morning, if we can, conduct you into the inner chambers of our text, place its words under the microscope, and peer into the recesses of each sentence. We only wish our microscope were of a greater magnifying power, and our ability to expound the text more complete; for there are mines of instruction here. Superficially read, this royal promise has cheered and encouraged tens of thousands, but there is a wealth in it which the diligent digger and miner shall alone discover. Its shallows are cool and refreshing for the lambs, but in its depths are pearls for which we hope to dive.

Our first head, this morning, is *rest*: "Come unto me,

all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The second head is *rest*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

I. Let us begin at the beginning with the first REST, and here we will make divisions only for the sake of bringing out the sense more clearly.

1. Observe *the person invited* to receive this first rest: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." The word "*all*" first demands attention: "*All* ye that labor." There was need for the insertion of that wide word. Had not the Saviour said a little before, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes?" Some one who had been listening to the Saviour, might have said, "The Father, then, has determined to whom he will reveal the Christ; there is a number chosen, according to the Father's good pleasure, to whom the gospel is revealed; while from another company it is hidden!" The too hasty inference, which it seems natural for man to draw from the doctrine is, "Then there is no invitation for me; there is no hope for me; I need not listen to the gospel's warnings and invitations." So the Saviour, as if to answer that discouraging notion, words his invitation thus, "Come unto me, *all* ye that labor and are heavy laden." Let it not be supposed that election excludes any of you from the invitation of mercy; all of you who labor, are bidden to come. Whatever the great doctrine of predestination may involve, rest assured that it by no means narrows or diminishes the extent of gospel invitations. The good news is to be preached to "every creature" under heaven, and in this particular passage it is addressed to *all* the laboring and heavy laden.

The description of the person invited is very full. It describes him both actively and passively. "*All ye that la*

bor"—there is the activity of men bearing the yoke, and ready to labor after salvation; "*heavy laden*"—there is the passive form of their religious condition, they sustain a burden, and are pressed down, and sorely wearied by the load they bear. There are to be found many who are actively engaged in seeking salvation; they believe that if they obey the precepts of the law they will be saved, and they are endeavoring to the utmost to do them; they have been told that the performance of certain rites and ceremonies will also save them, they are performing those with great care; the yoke is on their shoulders, and they are laboring diligently. Some are laboring in prayer, some are laboring in sacraments, others in self-denials and mortifications, but as a class they are awakened to feel the need of salvation, and they are intensely laborious to save themselves. It is to these the Saviour addresses his loving admonition: in effect he tells them, "This is not the way to rest, your self-imposed labors will end in disappointment; cease your wearisome exertions, and believe in me, for I will at once give you rest—the rest which my labors have earned for believers." Very speedily those who are active in self-righteously working for salvation fall into the passive state, and become burdened; their labor of itself becomes a burden to them. Besides the burden of their self-righteous labor, there comes upon them the awful, tremendous, crushing burden of past sin, and a sense of the wrath of God which is due to that sin. A soul which has to bear the load of its own sin, and the load of divine wrath, is indeed heavily laden. Atlas with the world upon his back had a light load compared with a sinner upon whom mountains of sin and wrath are piled. Such persons frequently are burdened, in addition, by fears and apprehensions; some of them correct, others of them baseless, but anyhow the burden daily grows. Their active labors do not diminish their passive sufferings. The acute anguish of their souls will often be increased in proportion as their

endeavors are increased; and while they hope at first that if they labor industriously they will gradually diminish the mass of their sin, it happens that their labor adds to their weariness beneath its pressure; they feel a weight of disappointment, because their labor has not brought them rest; and a burden of despair, because they fear that deliverance will never come. Now these are the persons whom the Saviour calls to himself—those who are actively seeking salvation, those who are passively bearing the weight of sin and of divine wrath.

It is implied, too, that these are *undeserving* of rest, for it is said, "Come unto me, and I will *give* you rest." A gift is not of merit but of grace; wages and reward are for those who earn, but a gift is a matter of charity. O you who feel your unworthiness this morning, who have been seeking salvation earnestly, and suffering the weight of sin, Jesus will freely give to you what you cannot earn or purchase, he will give it as an act of his own free, rich, sovereign mercy; and he is prepared, if you come to him, to give it to you now, for so has he promised, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

2. Notice next, *the precept here laid down*: "Come." It is not "Learn," it is not "Take my yoke"—that is in the next verse, and is intended for the next stage of experience—but in the beginning the word of the Lord is, "Come unto me," "Come." A simple word, but very full of meaning. To come is to leave one thing and to advance to another. Come, then, ye laboring and heavy laden, leave your legal labors, leave your self-reliant efforts, leave your sins, leave your presumptions, leave all in which you hitherto have trusted, and come to Jesus, that is, think of, advance towards, rely upon the Saviour. Let your contemplations think of him who bore the load of human sin upon the cross of Calvary, where he was made sin for us. Let your minds consider him who from his cross hurled the enormous mass of

his people's transgressions into a bottomless sepulchre, where it was buried forever. Think of Jesus, the divinely-appointed substitute and sacrifice for guilty man. Then, seeing that he is God's own Son, let faith follow your contemplation; rely upon him, trust in him as having suffered in your stead, look to him for the payment of the debt which is due from you to the wrath of God. This is to come to Jesus. Repentance and faith make up this "Come"—the repentance which leaves the place where you now stand, the faith which comes into reliance upon Jesus.

Observe, that the command to "Come" is put in the present tense, and in the Greek it is intensely present. It might be rendered something like this: "Hither to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" It is a "Come" which means not "Come to-morrow or next year," but "Now, at once." Advance, ye slaves, flee from your task-master now! Weary ones, recline on the promise now, and take your rest! Come now! By an act of instantaneous faith which will bring instantaneous peace, come and rely upon Jesus, and he will now give you rest. Rest shall at once follow the exercise of your faith. Perform the act of faith now. O may the eternal Spirit lead some laboring heavy laden soul to come to Jesus, and to come at this precise moment!

It is "Come unto me." Notice that. The Christ in his personality is to be trusted in. Not "Come to John, and hear him say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,'" for no rest is there. John commands a preparation for the rest, but he has no rest to give to the soul. Come not to the Pharisees, who will instruct you in tradition, and in the jots and tittles of the law; but go past these to Jesus, the man, the God, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the propitiation for human guilt. If you want rest come to Christ in Gethsemane, to Christ on Calvary, to Christ risen, to Christ ascended. If you want rest, O weary souls, ye can find it nowhere until ye come and lay your burdens down at his

dear pierced feet, and find life in looking alone to him. There is the precept then. Observe it is nothing but that one word, "Come." It is not "Do;" it is not even "Learn." It is not, "Take up my yoke," that will follow after, but must never be forced out of its proper place. To obtain the first rest, the rest which is a matter of gift—all that is asked of you is that you come to have it. Now, the least thing that charity itself can ask when it gives away its alms, is that men come for it. Come ye needy, come and welcome; come and take the rest ye need. Jesus saith to you, "Come and take what I freely give." Without money come, without merit come, without preparation come. It is just, come, come now; come as you are, come with your burden, come with your yoke, though the yoke be the yoke of the devil, and the burden be the burden of sin, yet come as you are, and the promise shall be fulfilled to you, "I will give you rest."

3. Notice next *the promise spoken*, "I will give you rest." "I will give." It is a rest that is a gift; not a rest found in our experience by degrees, but given at once. As I shall have to show you, the next verse speaks of the rest that is found, wrought out, and discovered; but this is a rest given. We come to Jesus; we put out the empty hand of faith, and rest is given us at once most freely. We possess it at once, and it is ours forever. It is a *present* rest, rest now; not rest after death; not rest after a time of probation and growth and advancement; but it is rest given when we come to Jesus, given there and then. And it is *perfect* rest too; for it is not said, nor is it implied, that the rest is incomplete. We do not read, "I will give you partial rest," but "rest," as much as if there were no other form of it. It is perfect and complete in itself. In the blood and righteousness of Jesus our peace is perfect.

I shall not stay except to ask you now, brethren and sisters, whether you know the meaning of this given rest. Have you come to Jesus and has he given you perfect and present rest? If so, I know your eye will catch joyously

those two little words, "*And I,*" and I would bid you lovingly remember *the promiser* who speaks. Jesus promises and Jesus performs. Did not all your rest, when first your sin was forgiven, come from him? The load was gone, but who took it? The yoke was removed, but who lifted it from off the shoulder? Do you not give to Jesus, *this* day, the glory of all your rest from the burden of guilt? Do you not praise his name with all your souls? Yes, I know you do. And you know how that rest came to you. It was by his substitution and your faith in that substitution. Your sin was not pardoned by a violation of divine justice; justice was satisfied in Jesus; he gave you rest. The fact that he has made full atonement is the rest of your spirit this morning. I know that deep down in your consciences, the calm which blesses you springs from a belief in your Lord's vicarious sacrifice. He bore the unrest that you might have the rest, and you receive rest this day as a free gift from him. You have done now with servile toils and hopeless burdens, you have entered into rest through believing; but all the rest and deliverance still comes to you as a gift from his dear hands, who purchased with a price this blessing for your souls. I earnestly wish that many who have never felt that rest, would come and have it; it is all they have to do to obtain it—to *come* for it; just where they now are, if God enables them to exercise a simple act of faith in Jesus, he will give them rest from all their past sins, from all their efforts to save themselves, a rest which shall be to his glory and to their joy.

II. We must now advance to our second head—REST.

It looks rather strange that after having received rest, the next verse should begin: "Take my *yoke* upon you." "Ah! I had been set free from laboring, am I to be a laborer again?" Yes, yes, take my yoke and begin. "And my *burden* is light." "Burden? why, I was heavy laden just now, am I to carry another burden?" Yes. A yoke—actively and a burden—passively, I am to bear both of these.

"But I found rest by getting rid of my yoke and my burden!" And you are to find a further rest by wearing a new yoke, and bearing a new burden. Your yoke galled, but Christ's yoke is easy; your burden was heavy, but Christ's burden is light. Before we enter into this matter more fully, let us illustrate it. How certain it is that a yoke is essential to produce rest, and without it rest is unknown! Spain found rest by getting rid of that wretched monarch Isabella; an iron yoke was her dominion upon the nation's neck, crushing every aspiration after progress by an intolerable tyranny. Up rose the nation, shook off its yoke, and threw aside its burden, and it had rest in a certain sense, rest *from* an evil. But Spain has not fully rested yet, and it seems that she will never find permanent rest till she has voluntarily taken up another yoke, and found for herself another burden. In a word, she must have a strong, settled, recognized government, and then only will her distractions cease. This is just a picture of the human soul. It is under the dominion of Satan, it wears his awful yoke, and works for him; it bears his accursed burden, and groans under it; Jesus sets it free—but has it, therefore, a perfect rest? Yes, a rest *from*, but not a rest *in*. What is wanted now is a new government; the soul must have a sovereign, a ruling principle, a master-motive; and when Jesus has taken that position, rest is come. This further rest is what is spoken of in the second verse. Let me give you another symbol. A little stream flowed through a manufacturing town; an unhappy little stream it was, for it was forced to turn huge wheels and heavy machinery, and it wound its miserable way through factories where it was dyed black and blue, until it became a foul and filthy ditch, and loathed itself. It felt the tyranny which polluted its very existence. Now, there came a deliverer who looked upon the streamlet and said, "I will set thee free and give thee rest." So he stopped up the water-course, and said, "Abide in thy place, thou shalt no more flow where thou art enslaved and de

fled." In a very few days the brooklet found that it had but exchanged one evil for another. Its waters were stagnating, they were gathering into a great pool, and desiring to find a channel. It was in its very nature to flow on, and it foamed and swelled, and pressed against the dam which stayed it. Every hour it grew more inwardly restless, it threatened to break the barrier, and it made all who saw its angry looks tremble for the mischief it would do ere long. It never found rest until it was permitted to pursue an active course along a channel which had been prepared for it among the meadows and the corn fields. Then, when it watered the plains and made glad the villages, it was a happy streamlet, perfectly at rest. So our souls are made for activity, and when we are set free from the activities of our self-righteousness and the slavery of our sin, we must do something, and we shall never rest until we find that something to do. Hence in the text you will be pleased to see that there is something said about a yoke, which is the ensign of working, and something about a burden, which is the emblem of enduring. It is in man's mortal nature that he must do or endure, or else his spirit will stagnate and be far from rest.

I. We will consider this second rest, and notice that it is *rest after rest*. "I will give you rest" comes before "Ye shall find rest." It is the rest of a man who is already at rest, the repose of a man who has received a *given* rest, and now *discovers* the found rest. It is the rest of a learner—"Learn of me, and ye shall find rest." It is not so much the rest of one who was aforetime laboring and heavy laden, as of one who is to-day learning at the Saviour's feet. It is the rest of a seeker evidently, for finding usually implies a search. Having been pardoned and saved, the saved man in the course of his experience discovers more and more reason for peace; he is learning, and seeking, and he finds. The rest is evidently lighted upon, however, as a thing unknown, which becomes the subject of discovery. The man had a rest

from his burden ; now he finds a rest, *in* Christ, which exceeds what he asked or even thought.

I have looked at this rest after rest as being a treasure concealed in a precious box. The Lord Jesus gives to his people a priceless casket, called the gift of rest ; it is set with brilliants and inlaid with gems, and the substance thereof is of wrought gold ; whosoever possesses it feels and knows that his warfare is accomplished and his sin is pardoned. After awhile the happy owner begins to examine his treasure. It is all his own, but he has not yet seen it all, for one day he detects a secret drawer, he touches a hidden spring, and lo ! before him lies a priceless Koh-i-noor surpassing all the rest. It had been given him it is certain, but he had not seen it at first, and therefore he *finds* it. Jesus Christ gives us in the gift of himself all the rest we can ever enjoy, even heaven's rest lies in him ; but after we have received him we have to learn his value, and find out by the teaching of his Spirit the fulness of the rest which he bestows.

Now, I say to you who are saved, you who have looked to Jesus Christ, whether you looked this morning or twenty years ago, have you found out all that there is in the gift which Christ has given you ? Have you found out the secret drawer yet ? He has given you rest, but have you found the innermost rest which he works in your hearts ? It is yours, for it is included in the one gift ; but it is not yours enjoyed, understood, and triumphed in as yet unless you have found it, for the rest here meant is a rest after rest, a spiritual, experienced rest, which comes only to those who find it by experience.

2. Further observe that the rest in this second part of our text is a *rest in service*. It is coupled with a yoke, for activity—"Take my yoke ;" it is connected with a burden, for endurance—"My burden is light." He who is a Christian will not find rest in being idle. There is no unrest greater than that of the sluggard. If you would rest take Christ's yoke, be actively engaged in his service. As the

bullock has the yoke put upon its neck and then begins to draw, so have the yoke of Christ put on your neck and commence to obey him. The rest of heaven is not the rest of sleep ; they serve him day and night in his temple. They are always resting, and yet, in another sense, they rest not day nor night. Holy activity in heaven is perfect rest. True rest to the mind of the child of God is rest on the wing, rest in motion, rest in service, not rest with the yoke off, but with the yoke on. We are to enter upon this service voluntarily ; we are to *take his yoke* upon us voluntarily. You observe, it does not say, " Bear my yoke when it is laid upon you, but take it." Do not need to be told by the minister, " My dear brother, such-and-such a work you are bound to do," but take up the yoke of your own accord. Do not merely submit to be the Lord's servant, but seek his service. Ask, " What can I do ? " Be desirous to do it ; voluntarily, cheerfully, do all that lieth in you for the extension of his kingdom who has given you rest, and you shall find that the rest of your soul shall lie in your doing all you can for Jesus. Every active Christian will tell you he is never happier than when he has much to do ; and, on the whole, if he communes with Jesus, never more at rest than when he has least leisure. Look not for your rest in the mere enjoyments and excitements of religion, but find your rest in wearing a yoke which you love, and which, for that reason, is easy to your neck.

But, my dear brother, you must also be willing to bear Christ's burden. Now the burden of Christ is his cross, which every Christian must take up. Expect to be reproached, expect to meet with some degree of the scandal of the cross, for the offence of it never ceases. Persecution and reproach are a blessed burden ; when your soul loves Jesus it is a light thing to suffer for him, and, therefore, never by any cowardly retirement or refusal to profess your faith, evade your share of this honorable load. Woe unto those who say, " I will never be a martyr." No rest is sweet-

er than the martyr's rest. Woe unto those who say, "We will go to heaven by night along a secret road, and so avoid the shame of the cross." The rest of the Christian is found not in cowardice but in courage; it lies not in providing for ease but in the brave endurance of suffering for the truth. The restful spirit counts the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt; he falls in love with the cross, and counts the burden light, and so finds rest in service, and rest in suffering. Note that well.

3. The rest before us is *rest through learning*. Does a friend say, "I do not see how I am ever to get rest in working, and rest in suffering?" My dear brother, you never will except you go to school, and you must go to school to Christ. "Learn of me," saith he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Now, in order to learn of Christ it is implied that we lay aside all prejudices of the past. These things much prevent our finding peace. Have you any preconceived notions of what religion should be? Have you fashioned on your own anvil ideas of what the doctrines of the gospel ought to be? Throw them all away; learn of Jesus, and unlearn your own thoughts.

Then, when you are willing to learn, please to note what is to be learned. In order to get perfect rest of mind you have to learn of Jesus not only the doctrines which he teaches, but a great deal more than that. To go to school to be orthodox is a good enough thing, but the orthodoxy which brings rest is an orthodoxy of the spirit. Observe the text, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." What? For I am wise and learned, and can teach you? No; you are to learn from his example to be "meek and lowly in heart," and in learning that you will "find rest unto your souls." To catch the spirit of Jesus is the road to rest. To believe what he teaches me is something, to acknowledge him as my religious leader and as my Lord is much, but to strive to be conformed to his character, not merely in its external developments, but in its interior spirit this is the grammar

of rest. Learn to be like the meek and lowly-hearted One, and ye shall find rest.

He tells us the two points in which we are to learn of him. First, he is *meek*, then he says he is *lowly in heart*. Take the word "meek" first. I think that refers to the yoke-bearing, the active labor. If I actively labor for Christ I can only find rest in the labor by possessing the meek spirit of my Lord; for if I go forth to labor for Christ without a meek spirit, I shall very soon find that there is no rest in it, for the yoke will gall my shoulder. Somebody will begin objecting that I do not perform my work according to his liking. If I am not meek I shall find my proud spirit rising at once, and shall be for defending myself; I shall be irritated, or I shall be discouraged and inclined to do no more, because I am not appreciated as I should be. A meek spirit is not apt to be angry, and does not soon take offence, therefore if others find fault, the meek spirit goes working on, and is not offended; it will not hear the sharp word, nor reply to the severe criticism. If the meek spirit be grieved by some cutting censure and suffers for a moment, it is always ready to forgive and blot out the past, and go on again. The meek spirit in working only seeks to do good to others; it denies itself; it never expected to be well treated; it did not aim at being honored; it never sought itself, but purposed only to do good to others. The meek spirit bowed its shoulder to the yoke, and expected to have to continue bowing in order to keep the yoke in the right place for labor. It did not look to be exalted by yoke-bearing; it is fully contented if it can exalt Christ and do good to his chosen ones. Remember how meek and lowly Jesus was in all his service, and how calmly, therefore, he bore with those who opposed him? The Samaritans would not receive him, and therefore John, who felt the yoke a little galling to his unaccustomed shoulder, cried, "Master, call fire from heaven." Poor John! But Christ bore the yoke of service so well because of his meek spirit that he would do

nothing of the kind. If one village would not receive him he passed on to another, and so labored on. Your labor will become very easy if your spirits are very meek. It is the proud spirit that gets tired of doing good if it finds its labors not appreciated; but the brave, meek spirit, finds the yoke to be easy. "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." If ye learn his meekness his yoke will be pleasant to your shoulder, and you will never wish to have it removed.

Then, as to the passive part of our rest-lesson, note the text, "I am *lowly in heart*." We shall all have to bear something for the truth's sake so long as we are here. The reproach is a part of the gospel. The rod is a blessing of the covenant. The lowly heart finds the burden very light because it acquiesces in the divine will. The lowly heart says, "Not my will but thine be done; let God be glorified in me, it shall be all I ask. Rich, poor, sick, or in health, it is all the same to me. If God the great One has the glory, what matters where such a little one as I am may be placed?" The lowly spirit does not seek after great things for itself, it learns in whatsoever state it is therewith to be content. If it be poor, "Never mind," says the lowly one, "I never aspired to be rich; among the great ones of this earth I never desired to shine." If it be denied honor, the humble spirit says, "I never asked for earthly glory, I seek not mine own honor but his that sent me. Why should I be honored, a poor worm like me? If nobody speaks a good word of me, if I get Christ to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," that is enough. And if the lowly-hearted have little wordly pleasure, he says, "This is not my place for pleasure, I deserve eternal pain, and if I do not have pleasures here I shall have them hereafter. I am well content to bide my time." Our blessed Lord was always of that lowly spirit. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. The baubles of empire

had no charm for him. Had fame offered to sound her trumpet for none but him he would have cared not one whit for the offer. The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof were offered him, and he repelled the tempter. He was gentle, unobtrusive, self-denying; hence he treated his burden of poverty and shame as a light thing. "He endured the cross, despising the shame." If we once learn Christ's spirit we shall find rest unto our souls.

4. But we must pass on to notice, that it is very evident that the rest which we are to find is *a rest which grows entirely out of our spirits being conformed to the spirit of Christ*. "Learn of me, and ye shall find rest." It is then a spiritual rest altogether independent of circumstances. It is a vain idea of ours, to suppose that if our circumstances were altered we should be more at rest. My brother, if you cannot rest in poverty, neither would you in riches; if you cannot rest in the midst of persecution, neither would you in the midst of honor. It is the spirit within that gives the rest, that rest has little to do with any thing without. Men have sat on thrones and have found them uneasy places, while others on the rack have declared that they were at rest. The spirit is the spring of rest, as for the outward surroundings they are of small account. Let but your mind be like the mind of Christ, and you shall find rest unto your souls: a deep rest, a growing rest, a rest found out more and more, an abiding rest, not only which you have found, but which you shall go on to find. Justification gave you rest from the burden of sin, sanctification will give you rest from molesting cares; and in proportion as it becomes perfect, and you are like your Saviour, your rest shall become more like that of heaven.

I desire one other thing to be called to your mind before I turn to the practical use of the text, and that is, that here, as in the former rest, we are led to adore and admire the blessed person of our Lord. Observe the words, "*For I*." Oh! it all comes from him still, the second rest as much as

the first, the casket and the treasure in the secret drawer. It all hinges there, "*For I am.*" In describing the second rest there is more said concerning him than in the first. In the first part of our text it only says, "I will give you rest;" but in the second part his character is more fully explained—"For I am meek and lowly in heart;" as if to show that as believers grow in grace, and enjoy more rest, they see more of Jesus and know more of him. All they know when sin is pardoned is that *he* gives it, perhaps they hardly know how; but afterwards when they come to rest in him in sweet fellowship, they know more of his personal attributes, and their rest for that very reason becomes more deep and perfect.

Come we now to the practical use of all this. Read the chapter before us and find the clue. First, my dear brethren, if you find rest to your souls you will not be moved by the judgment of men. The children in the market-place were the type of our Lord's generation, who railed both at John the Baptist and at our Lord. The generation which now is follows the same course, men are sure to cavil at our service. Never mind; take Christ's yoke on you, live to serve *him*; take Christ's burden, make it a point to bear all things for his sake, and you will not be affected either by praise or censure, for you will find rest to your souls in surrendering yourself to the Father's will. If you learn of Jesus you will have rest from the fear of men. I recollect, before I came to London, being at a prayer-meeting where a very quaint brother prayed for me that I might be delivered from the "bleating of the sheep." I understood it after awhile, he meant that I might live above the fear of man, that when such a person said "How much we have been edified to-day," I might not be puffed up; or if another said, "How dull the discourse was to-day," I might not be depressed. You will be delivered from "the bleating of the sheep" when you have the spirit of the Good Shepherd.

Next you will be delivered from fretfulness at want of

success. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not." He had wrought his mighty works, and preached the gospel, and they did not repent. Was Jesus discouraged? Was he, as we sometimes are, ready to quit the work? No; his heart rested even then. If we come to Jesus, and take his yoke and burden, we too shall find rest, though Israel be not gathered.

Then, too, our Lord denounced judgments upon those who repented not. He told them that those who had heard the gospel and rejected it would find it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them. There are some who quarrel with the judgments of God, and declare that they cannot bear to think of the condemnation of the impenitent. Is not this because they do not bear the burden of the Lord, but are self-willed? The saints are described in the book of Revelation as singing "Hallelujah" while the smoke of Babylon goeth up for ever and ever. We shall never receive with humble faith the judgment of God in its terror until we take Christ's yoke, and are lowly in heart. When we are like Jesus we shall not feel that the punishment is too much for the sin, but we shall sympathize with the justice of God, and say "Amen" to it. When the mind is lowly it never ventures to sit in judgment upon God, but rests in the conviction that the Judge of all must do right. It is not even anxious to make apologies and smoothe down the fact, for it feels, it is not mine to justify him, he can justify himself.

So, again, with regard to the divine sovereignty. Notice the rest of the Saviour's mind upon that matter: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." Learning of Jesus we too shall rest in reference to divine decrees; we shall rejoice in whatever the Lord determines; predestination will not cast a gloom over us, but we shall thank God for all he ordains.

What a blessed rest ! As we open it up, does not its compass and depth surprise you ? How sweet to lie passive in his hands, reconciled to every mystery, content with every dispensation, honored by every service satisfied in God !

Now, I do not know whether I am right, but it struck me, when considering this text from various points, that probably our Saviour meant to convey an idea of deeper fellowship than we have yet considered. Did not he mean this—that he carried a yoke on his shoulder, which he calls, “*my yoke* ?” When bullocks are yoked, there are generally two. I have watched them in Northern Italy, and noticed that when two are yoked together, and they are perfectly agreed, the yoke is always easy to both of them. If one were determined to lie down and the other to stand up, the yoke would be very uncomfortable ; but when they are both of one mind you will see them look at each other with those large, lustrous, brown eyes of theirs so lovingly, and with a look they read each other’s minds, so that when one wants to lie down, down they go, or when one wishes to go forward, forward they both go, keeping step. In this way the yoke is easy. Now I think the Saviour says to us, “I am bearing one end of the yoke on my shoulder ; come, my disciple, place your neck under the other side of it, and then learn of me. Keep step with me, be as I am, do as I do. I am meek and lowly in heart ; your heart must be like mine, and then we will work together in blessed fellowship, and you will find that working with me is a happy thing ; for my yoke is easy to me, and will be to you. Come, then, true yoke-fellow, come and be yoked with me, take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.” If that be the meaning of the text, and perhaps it is, it invites us to a fellowship most near and honorable. If it be not the meaning of the text, it is at any rate a position to be sought after, to be laborers together with Christ, bearing the same yoke. Such be our lot. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

CARRIED BY FOUR.

“AND HE WITHDREW HIMSELF INTO THE WILDERNESS, AND PRAYED. AND IT CAME TO PASS ON A CERTAIN DAY, AS HE WAS TEACHING, THAT THERE WERE PHARISEES AND DOCTORS OF THE LAW SITTING BY, WHICH WERE COME OUT OF EVERY TOWN OF GALILEE, AND JUDÆA, AND JERUSALEM: AND THE POWER OF THE LORD WAS PRESENT TO HEAL THEM. AND, BEHOLD, MEN BROUGHT IN A BED A MAN WHICH WAS TAKEN WITH A Palsy: AND THEY SOUGHT MEANS TO BRING HIM IN, AND TO LAY HIM BEFORE HIM. AND WHEN THEY COULD NOT FIND BY WHAT WAY THEY MIGHT BRING HIM IN BECAUSE OF THE MULTITUDE, THEY WENT UPON THE HOUSE-TOP, AND LET HIM DOWN THROUGH THE TILING WITH HIS COUCH INTO THE MIDST BEFORE JESUS. AND WHEN HE SAW THEIR FAITH, HE SAID UNTO HIM, MAN, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE. AND THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES BEGAN TO REASON, SAYING, WHO IS THIS WHICH SPEAKETH BLASPHEMIES? WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS, BUT GOD ALONE? BUT WHEN JESUS PERCEIVED THEIR THOUGHTS, HE ANSWERING SAID UNTO THEM, WHAT REASON YE IN YOUR HEARTS? WHETHER IS EASIER, TO SAY, THY SINS BE FORGIVEN THEE; OR TO SAY, RISE UP AND WALK? BUT THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT THE SON OF MAN HATH POWER UPON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS (HE SAID UNTO THE SICK OF THE Palsy), I SAY UNTO THEE, ARISE, AND TAKE UP THY COUCH, AND GO INTO THINE HOUSE. AND IMMEDIATELY HE ROSE UP BEFORE THEM, AND TOOK UP THAT WHEREON HE LAY, AND DEPARTED TO HIS OWN HOUSE, GLORIFYING GOD. AND THEY WERE ALL AMAZED, AND THEY GLORIFIED GOD, AND WERE FILLED WITH FEAR, SAYING, WE HAVE SEEN STRANGE THINGS TO-DAY.”—Luke vi. 16—26.

You have this same narrative in the ninth chapter of Matthew, and in the second chapter of Mark. What is three times recorded by inspired pens must be regarded as trebly important, and well worthy of our earnest consideration. Observe the instructive fact that our Saviour retired and spent a special time in prayer when he saw unusual crowds assembling. He withdrew into the wilderness to hold communion with his father, and, as a consequence, to come forth clothed with an abundance of healing and saving power. Not but that in himself as God he always had that power

without measure ; but for our sakes he did it, that we might learn that the power of God will only rest upon us in proportion as we draw near to God. Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church.

When our Lord left his retirement he found the crowd around him exceeding great, and it was as motley as it was great ; for while here were many sincere believers, there were still more sceptical observers ; some were anxious to receive his healing power, others equally desirous to find occasion against him. So in all congregations, however the preacher may be clothed with his Master's spirit and his Master's might, there will be a mixed gathering ; there will come together your Pharisees and doctors of the law, your sharp critics ready to pick holes, your cold-blooded cavillers searching for faults ; at the same time, chosen of God and drawn by his grace, there will be present some devout believers who rejoice in the power that is revealed among men, and earnest seekers who wish to feel in themselves the healing energy. It seems to have been a rule with our Saviour to supply each hearer with food after his kind. The Pharisees soon found the matters to cavil at for which they were looking ; the Saviour so worded his expressions that they caught at them eagerly, and charged him with blasphemy ; the enmity of their hearts was thus thrown out upon the surface that the Lord might have an opportunity of rebuking it ; and had they been but willing, the power of the Lord was present to heal even them. Meanwhile, those poor tremblers who were praying for healing were not disappointed ; the Good Physician passed not by a single case, and at the same time his disciples who were looking for opportunities of praising him anew, were also fully gratified, for with glad eyes they saw the paralytic restored, and heard sins forgiven.

The case which the narrative brings before us, is that of a man stricken down with paralysis. This sad disease may have been of long continuance. There is a paralysis which

gradually kills the body, binding it more and more surely in utter helplessness. The nerve power is almost destroyed; the power of motion is entirely suspended; and yet the faculties of the mind remain, though greatly weakened, and some of them almost extinguished. Some have thought that this man may have been stricken with what is called the universal paralysis, which very speedily brings on death, which may account for the extreme haste of the four bearers to bring him near the Saviour. We do not know the details of his case, but certain is it that he was paralyzed; and, as I look at the case, and study the three records, I think I perceive with equal clearness that this paralysis was in some way or other, at least in the man's own judgment, connected with his sin. He was evidently penitent, as well as paralytic. His mind was as much oppressed as his bodily frame. I do not know that he could be altogether called a believer, but it is most probable that being burdened with a sense of sin he had a feeble hope in divine mercy, which, like a spark in smoking flax, had hard work to exist, but yet was truly there. The affliction for which his friends pitied him was in his body, but he himself felt a far severer trouble in his soul, and probably it was not so much with the view of being healed bodily, as in the hope of spiritual blessing, that he was willing to be subjected to any process by which he might come under the Saviour's eye. I gather that from the fact that our Saviour addressed him in these words, "Be of good cheer;" intimating that he was desponding, that his spirit sunk within him, and therefore, instead of saying to him at once, "Rise, take up thy bed," our tender-hearted Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He gave him at the outset a blessing for which the patient's friends had not asked, but which the man, though speechless, was seeking for in the silence of his soul. He was a "son," though an afflicted one; he was ready to obey the Lord's bidding when power was given, though as yet he could neither lift hand nor foot. He was longing for the

pardon of sin, yet could not stretch out his hand to lay hold upon the Saviour.

I intend to use this narrative for practical purposes ; may the Holy Spirit make it really useful. Our first remark will be this :

I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED.

This man must needs be borne of four, so the evangelist Mark, tells us ; there must be a bearer at each corner of the couch whereon he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the church by the means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any church will owe their conversion to the church's regular teaching in some form or other ; her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. Private personal prayer has, of course, in many instances been mingled with all this ; but the most of cases could not be so distinctly traced out as to be attributable mainly to individual prayers or exertions. This is the rule, I think, that the Lord will have the many brought to himself by the sounding of the great trumpet of jubilee in the dispensation of the gospel by his ministers. There are some, again, who are led to Jesus by the individual efforts of one person ; just as Andrew found his own brother Simon, so one believer by his private communication of the truth to another person becomes instrumental, by the power of God's Spirit, in his conversion. One convert will bring another, and that other a third. But this narrative seems to show that there are cases which will neither be brought by the general preaching of the word, nor yet by the instrumentality of one ; they require that there should be two, or three, or four in holy combination, who, with one consent, feeling one common agony of soul, shall resolve to band themselves togeth

er as a company for this one object, and never to cease from their holy confederation until this object is gained and their friend is saved. This man could not be brought to Christ by one, he must have four to lend their strength for his carrying, or he cannot reach the place of healing. Let us apply the principle. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved : his wife has prayed for him long ; her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed thee with a son who with thee rejoices in the fear of God. Hast thou not two Christian daughters also ? O ye four, take each a corner of this sick man's couch and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Saviour. A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ ; you are praying for your children ; never cease from that supplication : pray on. Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sabbath-school teacher will make a third ; he will take one corner of the bed ; and happy shall I be if I may join the blessed quaternion, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child. Dear brother, you are thinking of one whom you have long prayed for ; you have spoken to him also, and used all proper means, but as yet without effect. Perhaps you speak too comfortingly to him : it may be you have not brought that precise truth to bear upon him which his conscience requires. Seek yet more help. It may possibly be that a second brother will speak instructively, where you have only spoken consolingly ; perhaps the instruction may be the means of grace. Yet may it possibly happen that even instruction will not suffice any more than consolation, and it may be needful for you to call in a third, who perhaps will speak impressively with exhortation, and with warning, which may be the great requisite. You two, already in the field, may balance his exhortation, which might have been too pungent by itself, and might have raised prej-

ndice in the person's mind if it had come alone. All three of you together may prove the fit instruments in the Lord's hand. Yet when you three have happily combined, it may be the poor paralyzed one is not yet affected savingly; a fourth may be needed, who, with deeper affection than all three of you, and perhaps with an experience more suited to the case than yours, may come in, and working with you, the result may be secured. The four fellow-helpers together may accomplish, by the power of the Spirit, what neither one, nor two, nor three were competent to have done. It may sometimes happen that a man has heard Paul preach, but his clear doctrine, though it has enlightened his intellect, has not yet convinced his conscience. He has heard Apollos, and the glow of the orator's eloquent appeals has warmed his heart, but not humbled his pride. He has later still listened to Cephas, whose rough cutting sentences have hewn him down, and convinced him of sin; but ere he can find joy and peace in believing, he will require to hear the sweet affectionate words of John. Only when the fourth shall grasp the bed and give a hearty lift will the paralyzed person be laid in mercy's path. I anxiously desire to see in this church little bands of men and women bound to each other by zealous love to souls. I would have you say to one another, "This is a case in which we feel a common interest: we will pledge each other to pray for this person; we will unitedly seek his salvation." It may be that one of our seat-holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed; it may be that another has left the Sabbath-school unsaved. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by God's help. Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, "No man careth for my soul." Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and then seek that object by the most likely ways. I do not know, my brethren, how much of blessing might come to us through this, but I feel certain that until we have tried

it we cannot pronounce a verdict upon it ; nor can we be quite sure that we are free from all responsibility to men's souls until we have tested every possible and probable method for doing them good.

I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large church, who will become sick bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labor of love ought all of them to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men who will not shrink because of difficulty ; who will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burden, and will persevere until they succeed. They need be strong, for the burden is heavy ; they need be resolute, for the work will try their faith ; they need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain ; they must be believing, or they will be utterly useless,—Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service ; but without faith it is impossible to please him. Where shall we find quartettes such as these ? May the Lord find them, and may he send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralyzed here to-day.

II. We now pass on to the second observation, that SOME CASES THUS TAKEN UP WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED.

The essential means by which a soul is saved is clear enough. The four bearers had no question with each other as to what was the way to affect this man's cure : they were unanimous in this—that they must bring him to Jesus : by some means or other, by hook or by crook, they must place him in the Saviour's way. That was undoubted fact. The question was, how to do this ? There is an old worldly proverb, that "where there's a will there's a way ;" and that proverb, I believe, may be safely imported into spiritual things, almost without a caution or grain of salt. "Where

there's a will there's a way ;" and if men be called of God's grace to a deep anxiety for any particular soul, there is a way by which that soul may be brought to Jesus ; but that way may not suggest itself till after much consideration. In some cases the way to impress the heart may be an out-of-the-way way, an extraordinary way—a way which ordinarily should not be used and would not be successful. I dare say the four bearers in the narrative thought early in the morning, "We will carry this poor paralytic to the Saviour, passing into the house by the ordinary door ;" but when they attempted to do so the multitudes so blocked up the road that they could not even reach the threshold. "Make way ; make way for the sick ! Stand aside there, and give room for a poor paralyzed man. For mercy's sake, give a little space, and let the sick man reach the healing prophet !" In vain their entreaties and commands. Here and there a few compassionate persons back out of the crowd, but the many neither can nor will remove ; besides, many of them are engaged upon a similar business, and have equal reasons for pressing in. "See," cries one of the four, "I will make way ;" and he pushes and elbows himself a little distance into the passage. "Come on you three !" he cries : "follow up, and fight for it, inch by inch." But they cannot do it ; it is impossible ; the poor patient is ready to die for fear ; the bed is tossed about by the throng like a cockle-shell boat on the sea-waves, the patient's alarm increases, the bearers are distressed, and they are quite glad to get outside again and consider. It is evidently quite impossible by ordinary means to get him in. What then ? "We cannot burrow under the ground : can we not go over the heads of the people, and let the man down from above ? Where is the staircase ?" Frequently there is an external staircase to the top of an eastern house ; we cannot be sure that there was one in this case ; but if not, the next door house may have had such a convenience, and so the resolute bearers reached the top and passed from one roof to another.

Where we have no definite information much may be left to conjecture ; but this much is clear : by some means they elevated their unhappy burden to the house-top, and provided themselves with the necessary tackle with which to let him down. The Saviour was probably preaching in one of the upper rooms, unless the house was a poor one without an upper story. Perhaps the room was open to the courtyard, which was crowded. At any rate, the Lord Jesus was under cover of a roof, and a substantial roof too. No one who carefully reads the original will fail to see that there was real roofing to be broken through. It has been suggested as a difficulty, that the breaking up of a roof might involve danger to those below, and would probably make a great smother of dust ; and to avoid this, there have been various suppositions—such as that the Saviour was standing under an awning, and the men rolled up the canvas ; or that our Lord stood under a verandah with a very light covering, which the men could readily uncover ; others have even invented a trap-door for the occasion. But with all due deference to eminent travellers, the words of the evangelists cannot be so readily disposed of. According to our text, the man was let down through “tiling,” not canvas, or any light material ; whatever sort of tiling it was, it was certainly made of burnt clay, for that enters into the essence of the word. Moreover, according to Mark, after they had uncovered the roof, which, I suppose, means the removal of the “tiling,” they *broke it up*, which looks exceedingly like breaking through a ceiling. The Greek word used by Mark, which is interpreted “breaking up,” is a very emphatic word, and signifies digging through, or scooping up, which evidently conveys the idea of considerable labor for the removal of material. We are told that the roofs of Oriental houses are often made of big stones ; that may be true as a general rule, but not in this case, for the house was covered with tiles ; and as to the dust and falling rubbish, that may or may not be a necessary conclusion : but as clear as noon-

day is it that a substantial house-top, which required until ing and digging through, had a hole made in it, and through the aperture the man in his bed was let down. Perhaps there was dust, and possibly there was danger too, but the bearers were prepared to accomplish their purpose at all risks. They must get the sick man in somehow. There is no need, however, to suppose either, for no doubt the four men would be careful not to incommode the Saviour or his hearers. The tiles or plaster might be removed to another part of the flat roof, and the boards likewise, as they were broken up: and as for the spars, they might be sufficiently wide to admit the narrow couch of the sick man without moving any of them from their places. Mr. Hartley, in his *Travels*, says, "When I lived at Aegina I used to look up not unfrequently at the roof above my head, and contemplate how easily the whole transaction of the paralytic might take place. The roof was made in the following manner;—A layer of reeds, of a large species, was placed upon the rafters; on these a quantity of heather was strewed; on the heather earth was deposited, and beaten down into a solid mass. Now, what difficulty would there be in removing first the earth, next the heather, and then the reeds? Nor would the difficulty be increased, if the earth had a pavement of tiling laid upon it. No inconvenience could result to the persons in the house, from the removal of the tiles and earth; for the heather and reeds would stop any thing that might otherwise fall down, and would be removed last of all." To let a man down through the roof was a device most strange and striking, but it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make here. If we want to have souls saved, we must not be too squeamish and delicate about conventionalities, rules, and proprieties, for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. We must make up our minds to this: "Smash or crash, every thing shall go to pieces which stands between the soul and its God; it matters not what tiles are to be taken off, what plaster is to

be digged up, or what boards are to be torn away, or what labor, or trouble, or expense we may be at: the soul is too precious for us to stand upon nice questions. If by any means we may save some is our policy. Skin for skin, yea, all that we have is nothing comparable to a man's soul." When four true hearts are set upon the Spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs.

I have no doubt it was a difficult task to carry the paralyzed man up stairs; the breaking up of the roof, the removing the tiling with all due care, must have been a laborious task, and have required much skill, but the work was done, and the end was gained. We must never stop at difficulties; however stern the task, it must always be more difficult to us to let a soul perish than to labor in the most self-denying form for its deliverance.

It was a very singular action which the bearers performed. Who would have thought of breaking up a roof? Nobody but those who love much, and much desired to benefit the sick. O that God would make us attempt singular things to save souls. May a holy ingenuity be excited in the church: a sacred inventiveness set at work for winning men's hearts. It appeared to his generation a singular thing when John Wesley stood on his father's tombstone and preached at Epworth. Glory be to God that he had the courage to preach in the open air. It seemed an extraordinary thing when certain ministers delivered sermons in the theatres; but it is matter of joy that sinners have been reached by such irregularities who might have escaped all other means. Let us but feel our hearts full of zeal for God, and love for souls, and we shall soon be led to adopt means which others may criticise, but which Jesus Christ will accept.

After all, the method which the four friends followed was one most suitable to their abilities. They were, I suppose, four strong fellows, to whom the load was no great

weight, and the work of digging was comparatively easy. The method suited their capacity exactly. And what did they do when they had let the sick man down? Look at the scene and admire? I do not read that they said a single word, yet what they did was enough: abilities for lifting and carrying did the needful work. Some of you say, "Ah, we cannot be of any use; we wish we could preach." These men could not preach: they did not need to preach. They lowered the paralytic, and their work was done. They could not preach, but they could hold a rope. We want in the Christian church not only preachers, but soul-winners, who can bear souls on their hearts, and feel the solemn burden; men who, it may be, cannot talk, but who can weep; men who cannot break other men's hearts with their language, but who break their own hearts with their compassion. In the case before us there was no need to plead "Jesus, thou son of David, look up, for a man is coming down who needs thee." There was no need to urge that the patient had been so many years sick. We do not know that the man himself uttered a word. Helpless and paralyzed, he had not the vigor to become a suppliant. They placed his almost lifeless form before the Saviour's eye, and that was appeal enough; his sad condition was more eloquent than words. O hearts that love sinners lay their lost estate before Jesus; bring their cases as they are before the Saviour; if your tongues stammer, your hearts will prevail; if you cannot speak even to Christ himself, as you would desire, because you have not the gift of prayer, yet if your strong desires spring from the spirit of prayer you cannot fail. God help us to make use of such means as are within our power, and not to sit down idly to regret the powers we do not possess. Perhaps it would be dangerous for us to possess the abilities we covet; it is always safe to consecrate those we have.

III. Now we must pass on to an important truth. We

may safely gather from the narrative **THAT THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS GENERALLY LIES IN UNPARDONED SIN.**

Jesus intended to heal the paralyzed man, but he did so by first of all saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." There are some in this house of prayer this morning who are spiritually paralyzed; they have eyes and they see the gospel; they have ears and they have heard it, and heard it attentively too; but they are so paralyzed that they will tell you, and honestly tell you, that they cannot lay hold upon the promise of God; they cannot believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls. If you urge them to pray, they say; "We try to pray, but it is not acceptable prayer." If you bid them have confidence, they will tell you, though not in so many words perhaps, that they are given up to despair. Their mournful ditty is:—

"I would, but cannot sing;
I would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

"I would, but can't repeat,
Though I endeavor oft;
This stony heart can ne'er relent
Till Jesus makes it soft.

I would, but cannot love,
Though woo'd by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be;
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve:
My help must come from thee."

The bottom of this paralysis is sin upon the conscience, working death in them. They are sensible of their guilt, but powerless to believe that the crimson fountain can remove it: they are alive only to sorrow, despondency, and agony. Sin paralyzes them with despair. I grant you that into this despair there enters largely the element of unbelief,

which is sinful ; but I hope there is also in it a measure of sincere repentance, which bears in it the hope of something better. Our poor, awakened paralytics sometimes hope that they may be forgiven, but they cannot believe it ; they cannot rejoice ; they cannot cast themselves on Jesus ; they are utterly without strength. Now, the bottom of it, I say again, lies in unpardoned sin, and I earnestly entreat you who love the Saviour to be earnest in seeking the pardon of these paralyzed persons. You tell me that *I* should be earnest ; so I should ; and so I desire to be : but, brethren, their cases appear to be beyond the minister's sphere of action ; the Holy Spirit determines to use other agencies in their salvation. They have heard the public word ; they now need private consolation and aid, and that from three or four. Lend us your help, ye earnest brethren ; form your parties of four ; grasp the couches of these who wish to be saved, but who feel they cannot believe. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you the means of leading them into forgiveness and eternal salvation. They have been lying a long time waiting ; their sin, however, still keeps them where they are ; their guilt prevents their laying hold on Christ ; there is the point, and it is for such cases that I earnestly invoke my brethren's aid.

IV. Let us proceed to notice, fourthly, that JESUS CAN REMOVE BOTH THE SIN AND THE PARALYSIS IN A SINGLE MOMENT. It was the business of the four bearers to bring the man to Christ ; but there their power ended. It is our part to bring the guilty sinner to the Saviour : there our power ends. Thank God, when *we* end, Christ begins, and works right gloriously. Observe that he began by saying : "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He laid the axe at the root ; he did not desire that the man's sins might be forgiven, or express a good wish in that direction, but he pronounced an absolution by virtue of that authority with which he was clothed as the Saviour. The poor man's sins there and then

ceased to be, and he was justified in the sight of God. Believest thou this, my hearer, that Christ did thus for the paralytic man? Then I charge you believe something more, that if on earth Christ had power to forgive sin before he had offered an atonement, much more hath he power to do this, now that he hath poured out his blood, and hath said, "It is finished," and hath gone into his glory, and is at the right hand of the Father. He is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin. Should he send his Spirit into thy soul to reveal himself in thee, thou wouldst in an instant be entirely absolved. Does blasphemy blacken thee? Does a long life of infidelity pollute thee? Hast thou been licentious? Hast thou been abominably wicked? A word can absolve thee—a word from those dear lips which said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." I charge thee ask for that absolving word. No earthly priest can give it thee; but the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, can utter it at once. Ye twos and fours who are seeking the salvation of men, here is encouragement for you. Pray for them now, while the gospel is being preached in their hearing; pray for them day and night, and bring the glad tidings constantly before them, for Jesus is still able "to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

After our blessed Lord had taken away the root of the evil, you observe he then took away the paralysis itself. It was gone in a single moment. Every limb in the man's body was restored to a healthy state; he could stand, could walk, could lift his bed, both nerve and muscle were restored to vigor. One moment will suffice, if Jesus speaks, to make the despairing happy, and the unbelieving full of confidence. What *we* cannot do with our reasonings, persuadings, and entreaties, nor even with the letter of God's promise, Christ can do in a single instant by his Holy Spirit, and it has been our joy to see it done. This is the standing miracle of the church, performed by Christ to-day

even as aforetime. Paralyzed souls who could neither do nor will, have been able to do valiantly, and to will with solemn resolution. The Lord has poured power into the faint, and to them that had no might he hath increased strength. He can do it still. I say again to loving spirits, who are seeking the good of others, let this encourage you. You may not have to wait long for the conversions you aim at; it may be ere another Sabbath ends, the person you pray for may be brought to Jesus; or if you have to wait a little, the waiting shall well repay you, and meanwhile remember he has never spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth; he has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain."

V. Passing on, and drawing to a conclusion: WHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE, IT WILL BE APPARENT. He forgave the man's sin and took away his disease at the same time. How was this apparent? I have no doubt the pardon of the man's sin was best known to himself; but possibly those who saw that gleaming countenance which had been so sad before, might have noticed that the word of absolution sunk into his soul as the rain into the thirsty earth. "Thy sins be forgiven thee," fell on him as a dew from heaven; he believed the second declaration, and his eyes sparkled. He might almost have felt indifferent whether he remained paralyzed or not, it was such joy to be forgiven, forgiven by the Lord himself. That was enough, quite enough for him; but it was not enough for the Saviour, and therefore he bade him take up his couch and walk, for he had given him strength to do so. The man's healing was proved by his obedience. Openly to all on-lookers an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creature's restoration. Notice, our Lord bade him rise—he rose; he had no power to do so except that power which comes with divine commands. He rose, for Christ said "Rise." Then he folded up that miserable palliasse

—the Greek word used shows us that it was a very poor, mean, miserable affair—he rolled it up as the Saviour bade him, he shouldered it, and went to his home. His first impulse must have been to throw himself down at the Saviour's feet, and say, "Blessed be thy name ;" but the Master said, "Go to thy house ;" and I do not find that he staid to make one grateful obeisance, but elbowing the crowd, jostling the throng with his load on his back, he proceeded to his house just as he was told, and that without deliberation, or questioning. He did his Lord's bidding, and he did it accurately, in detail, at once, and most cheerfully. Oh! how cheerfully ; none can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis removed from the heart, is obedience. If thou art really saved thou wilt do what Jesus bids thee ; thy request will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" and that once ascertained, thou wilt be sure to do it. You tell me Christ has forgiven you, and yet you live in rebellion to his commands ; how can I believe you ? You say you are a saved man, and yet you will fully set up your own will against Christ's will ; what evidence have I of what you say ? Have I not, rather, clear evidence that you speak not the truth ? Open, careful, prompt, cheerful obedience to Christ, becomes the test of the wonderful work which Jesus works in the soul.

VI. Lastly, ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD.

Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honor to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend ! Who else united in glorifying God ? Why, first the man who was restored. Did not every part of his body glorify God ? I think I see him ! He sets one foot down to God's glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God's glory, he carries his bed to God's glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he

speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God. When a man is saved his whole manhood glorifies God ; he becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of him, spirit, soul and body. As an heir of heaven, he brings glory to the Great Father who has adopted him into the family, he breathes and eats and drinks to God's praise. When a sinner is brought into the church of God we are all glad, but we are none of us so joyous and thankful as he ; we would all praise God, but *he* must praise him the loudest, and he will.

But who next glorified God ? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. We will suppose that he had a wife. That morning when the four friends came and put him on the bed, and carried him out, it may be she shook her head in loving anxiety, and I dare say she said, "I am half afraid to trust him with you. Poor, poor creature, I dread his encountering the throng. I am afraid it is madness to hope for success. I wish you Godspeed in it, but I tremble. Hold well the bed ; be sure you do not let him fall. If you do let him down through the roof hold fast the ropes, be careful that no accident occurs to my poor bedridden husband ; he is bad enough as he is, do not cause him more misery." But when she saw him coming home, walking with the bed on his back, can you picture her delight ? How she would begin to sing, and praise and bless the Lord Jehovah Rophi, who had healed her beloved one. If there were little children about, playing before the house, how they would shout for glee, "Here's father ; here's father walking again, and come home with the bed on his back ; he is made whole again, as he used to be when we were very little." What a glad house ! They would gather round him, all of them, wife and children, and friends and neighbors, and they would begin to sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine in-

iquities : who healeth all thy diseases." How the man would sing those verses, rejoicing in the forgiveness first, and the healing next, and wondering how it was that David knew so much about it, and had put his case into such fit words.

Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utter but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples who were around the Saviour, they glorified God, too. They rejoiced, and said one to another, "We have seen strange things to-day." The whole Christian church is full of sacred praise when a sinner is saved ; even heaven itself is glad.

But there was glory brought to God, even by the common people who stood around. They had not yet entered into that sympathy with Christ which the disciples felt, but they were struck by the sight of this great wonder, and they, too, could not help saying that God had wrought great marvels. I pray that on-lookers, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, when they see the desponding comforted, and lost ones brought in, may be compelled to bear their witness to the power of divine grace, and be led themselves to be partakers in it. There is "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," when a paralyzed soul is filled with gracious strength.

Now, shall I need to stand here, and entreat for the four to carry poor souls to Jesus ? Shall I need to appeal to my brethren who love their Lord, and say, band yourselves together to win souls ? Your humanity to the paralytic soul claims it, but your desire to bring glory to God compels it. If you are indeed what you profess to be, to glorify God must be the fondest wish and the loftiest ambition of your souls. Unless ye be traitors to my Lord as well as inhuman to your fellow-men, you will catch the practical thought which I have striven to bring before you, and you will seek out some fellow Christians, and say, "Come, let us pray together, for such an one," and if you know a desperate case

you will make up a sacred quaternion, to resolve upon its salvation. May the power of the Highest abide upon you, and who knoweth what glory the Lord may gain through you? Never forget this strange story of the bed which carried the man, and the man who carried his bed.

SERMOM XXVII.

JESUS NO PHANTOM

AND WHEN THE DISCIPLES SAW HIM WALKING ON THE SEA, THEY WERE TROUBLED, SAYING, IT IS A SPIRIT; AND THEY CRIED OUT FOR FEAR."—Matthew xiv. 26.

SOME of the richest comforts are lost to us for want of clear perception. What consolation could be greater to the tempest-tossed disciples than to know their Master was present, and to see him manifestly revealed as Lord of sea as well as land? Yet because they did not discern him clearly, they missed the incomparable consolation. What is worse, at times the dimness of our perception will even turn the rarest consolation into the source of fear. Jesus is come, and in his coming the sun of their joy has risen, but they do not perceive it to be Jesus, and therefore thinking it to be a phantom, they are filled with alarm, and cry out in dread. He who was their best friend, they were as much afraid of as though he had been the arch enemy. Christ walking on the wave should have put all fear to rest, but instead thereof they mistake him for a phantom appearing amidst the storm, foreboding darker ill. They were filled with dismay by that which ought to have lifted them up with exultation. Oh, the benefit of the heavenly eye-salve by which the eye is cleared! May the Holy Spirit anoint our eyes therewith. Oh, the excellence of faith which, like the telescope, brings Christ near to us, and lets us see him as he is! Oh, the sweetness of walking near to Christ, and knowing him with an assured, confident, clear knowledge, for this would give us comforts which now we miss, and at once remove from us distresses which to-day unnecessarily afflict us.

The subject upon which I wish to speak, will be indicated to you if I supply you with the outline of it first of all. The first head will be this :—*it is too common an error to make a phantom of Christ ; and secondly, we are most apt to do this when Jesus is most evidently revealed ; and therefore, thirdly, from this spring our greatest sorrows ; and, fourthly, if we could be cured of this evil, Jesus would rise very much in our esteem, and many other blessed results would be sure to follow.*

I. IT IS TOO COMMON AN ERROR TO MAKE A PHANTOM OF CHRIST.

There are some who make a Christ of a phantom, I mean they take that to be their Saviour which is but a delusion ; they have dreamed so, they have excited themselves up to a high pitch of presumptuous credulity, they have persuaded themselves into delusive comfort, and they make their excited feeling or fancy their Christ. They are not saved, but they think they are ; Jesus is not known to them, they are unspiritual, they are not his sheep, they are not his disciples, yet they have put som thing up before their mind's eye which they think to be Christ, and their ideal of Christ, which is but a phantom, is Christ to them. A terrible error ! May God save us from it and bring us to know the Lord indeed and in truth by the teaching of his Holy Spirit ; for to know him is life eternal. But an equally and probably a more common error is to make a phantom of Christ. More or less we have all erred in this direction. Let me show you this for reproof and direction.

First, how often we have done this *in the matter of sin and the cleansing of it !* Our sin seems to us, when we are convinced of it, very real. Real indeed it is, our offences against God are no imaginary ones, we have really provoked him to wrath, and he is angry with us every day. The stain of sin is not on the surface merely, the leprosy lies deep within. Sin is a horrible evil, and when our Spirits

have been able to see the reality and the heinousness of it, they sink within us. But oh, what a glorious thing it is when we can with equal vividness see the actual cleansing from sin which Christ confers on all believers by his precious blood ! To see the scarlet and to weep over it is well, but then to see that same scarlet vanish in the pure white of the atoning sacrifice, this is better. Did you ever get as clear a perception of the second as you have done of the first ? It is a great blessing when God makes sin to be experimentally heavy to you so that you feel it, but it is a greater blessing still when the atoning blood is quite as vividly realized, and you see the sweat drops bloody of Gethsemane, and the pouring out of the life of the Redeemer upon Calvary, and the agonies unknown by which guilt was fully expiated before the eternal throne. My brethren, when we are under concern of soul, or even after our first conviction, when sin returns heavily upon our spirits, our fears, and terrors, and alarms, are real enough ; no one dares to say to us then that we are in a state of nervous excitement about a fiction ; our danger then is right before us, as clearly as the flames are before some poor person immured in a burning house : we are sure of the danger, we see it, we perceive it, we feel it in the very core of our nature. But there is salvation provided by the Redeemer ; he took our sin upon himself, he suffered the punishment of it, he has put the sin away ; believing in him our sin has gone, we have a right to peace, we are fully warranted in standing before God and saying, " Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? "

What we want is not to think of this as a dreamy thing, which may or may not be, but to realize it as a fact quite as sure, quite as certain as our distress and the sin which caused it. We are not to look through the storm upon the Saviour and view him as though he were a will-o'-the-wisp, a ghostly thing, while the storm that surrounds us is real, but to see a real Saviour for real sin, and to rejoice in real par-

don, a pardon which has buried all our sins; a real salvation, a salvation which has set our feet upon a rock beyond the reach of harm. Brethren, if we came to this point about sin we should have less of the groaning, or if as much of the groaning, we should still have more of the rejoicing. We lament for sin, and we do well. I hope we shall till we reach the gates of heaven. Sin can never be too much lamented or repented of; but at the same time we are not so to mourn over sin as to forget that Jesus died, and thereby cancelled all our guilt. No, with every note of lamentation lift up the joyful strain of triumph, for iniquity is gone, Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and he that believeth in him is not condemned, neither can he be, world without end.

The same remarks apply to *the matter of our acceptance with God after our pardon*. Dear brethren and sisters, if I may speak for the rest of you, our shortcomings in Christian duty are often very painfully real to our souls; we cannot preach a sermon, or offer prayer, or give an alms, or do any service for our Lord but what we feel, when all is done, that we are unprofitable servants. The faults and imperfections of our service stare us in the face, and there is not a day we live but what we are compelled to say that we come very far short of what Christians should be; in fact, we are led sometimes to question whether we can be Christians at all, and very rightly are we anxious as to the truthfulness of our professions. When we come to the Lord's table and examine ourselves, we find many causes of disquietude, and much reason for trembling of spirit. Looking through the whole course of our Christian career, shame must cover our face; we have good need to say, "Not unto us, not unto us be glory;" we cannot suppose ourselves able to take any glory, our life has been so inglorious, so undeserving, so hell-deserving. And there are some Christians to whom this state of things is very, very, very, very painfully conspicuous. They are of a desponding turn of mind, much given to looking with

in, and their inward corruptions and the outward displays thereof cause them continued disquietude and alarm. My brethren, there is so much that is good about all this, that who shall condemn it? But at the same time the sacred balance of the soul must be maintained. Are my short-comings real? Equally real is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, in which all believers always stand. Are my prayers imperfect? Ay; but equally perfect and prevalent are the prayers and intercessions of my great Advocate before the throne. Am I defiled with sin, and therefore worthy to be rejected? Equally true is it that in him is no sin, and his eternal merits have weight with the ever-blessed Father, and stand me in good stead as he, my representative and surety, stands before the throne. Yes; I am in myself unworthy but I am accepted in the Beloved. "I am black;" "Yes," says the believer, "it is so;" add, however, the next clause, "but comely;" equally sure it is that we are comely, yea, in God's sight, we are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." As Jehovah sees us in Christ Jesus, he beholdeth no iniquity in us; Christ has put our blemishes away, and made us comely in his comeliness; he sees every thing that is lovely in us; Christ has bestowed his own beauty upon us, for he is made this day of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. All we want is in Christ. Our standing is safe in him, and the love of the Father towards us comes to us without diminution at any time, despite our flaws and failures through the perfection of the beloved One's acceptance. Now do not overcloud this fact. Do not look at the Lord your righteousness as a phantom; do not cry out as if you thought his work to be an impalpable something that comforts others, but cannot comfort you. The work of Jesus is the grandest of all facts. O for faith to grasp it and rely upon it as such!

The principle applies next in *the matter of sanctification*. Very real and close to our souls, my brethren, is the flesh; it makes us groan daily, being burdened; very close home

to us are our corruptions—these foes of our own household worry us too much to allow us to forget them. Very plain to us also are our temptations, they await us on all sides. And the inward conflict which comes of our fallen nature, and the temptations of Satan and the world—this too is very clear. We can no more doubt our conflicts than the wounded soldier doubts the bloodiness of the battle. All these things are evermore before our eyes to our grief. But I am afraid that here, too, Christ Jesus is often to us as an apparition merely, and not as a real sharer in our spiritual conflicts. Know ye not, beloved, that Jesus Christ is touched with tender sympathy for you in all your temptations? Understand you not that he has prepared provision for you in all your conflicts that you may surely win the day? Expect you not even yet to say, I have overcome through the blood of the Lamb? Will you not at this hour shout the anticipatory note of triumph, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ?” You have corruptions within—this is a fact; but Christ is formed in you the hope of glory—this is an equal fact. There is that in you which would destroy you, but there is also that implanted in you which cannot be destroyed—this is equally true. You are in the first Adam made in the image of the earthy, over this you lament, but in the second Adam you already begin to bear the image of the heavenly, and you shall perfectly bear it ere long. Can you not grasp this? Alas! we do not lay hold of these things, do not get to say, as the apostle John did, “which we have seen, with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.” Too much is this with us a doctrine to be accepted because we are taught it, a matter to be received because some other persons have experienced it, but too little is it a subject of inward living experience. For you and me to know by blessed realization that it is so, that the Holy Spirit sent forth from the Father is in us, and with us, and that Christ will overcome our sin within us

by the power of the cleansing water which flowed with the blood from his side, and will as much deliver us from the power of sin, as he has already saved us from the guilt of sin—this is heavenly experience indeed.

We must not forget to illustrate this state of mind also by the condition of many saints when *under trial*. How often when the storms are out, and our poor bark is filling, do we realize every thing but what we should! We are like the disciples on the Galilean lake. The ship is real—ah, how the timbers creak! the sea is real—how the hungry waves leap up to destroy them! the winds are real—see how the canvas is rent to ribbons, how the mast bends like a bow! their own discomforts are real—wet to the skin with the spray, and drenched, and cold are they all! their dangers are real—the ship must certainly go down with all on board! every thing is real but the Master walking on the waves; and yet beloved, there was nothing so real in all that storm as the Master. All else might be a matter of deception to them, but he was real and true. All else did change, and pass away, and subside into calm, but he remained still the same. Now, observe how often we are in a similar condition. Our wretched circumstances, the bare camp board, our bodily weakness, the loss of that dear child or parent, all the distresses that await us, the dread of bankruptcy, or penury, all these seem real; but that word, “I am with thee,” appears often in such circumstances to be a matter of belief certainly, but not a matter of realization; and that promise, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose—” we dare not deny it, but we are not comforted by it to the degree we should be, because we do not grip it, grasp it, know it. The holy children in the fire knew they were in the fire, but they were safe because they knew to an equal certainty, that the Son of man was there with them. And so in the furnace you know that “no trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous;” know equally well that where

Jesus is, the trial is blessed, and the affliction hath a sweetness in it unknown to aught beside.

I shall only illustrate this in two other points. My dear brethren, in the matter of *death*, I do not know whether you can all think of death without a shudder. I am afraid there are not many of us who can. It is very easy to sing, when we are here on Sundays rejoicing with all our brethren—

‘ On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye.”

I am afraid, I am afraid, I am afraid we would rather live than die after all. A missionary told me the story of an old negro woman in Jamaica who used to be continually singing, “Angel Gabriel, come and take Aunt Betsy home to glory,” but when some wicked wag knocked at the door at the dead of night, and told her the angel Gabriel was come for Aunt Betsy, she said, “She lives next door.” I am afraid it may possibly be so with us, that though we think we wish the waves of Jordan to divide that we may be landed on the other shore, we linger on the bank shivering still. It is so. We dread to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay; we cast many “a longing, lingering look behind.” But why is it? It is all because we realize the dying bed, the death sweat, the pangs, the glazing eye—we often realize what never turns out to be reality, but do not realize what are sure to be realities, namely, the angelic watchers at the bedside, waiting to act as a convoy to bear our spirits up through tracts unknown of purest ether. We do not realize the presence of the Saviour receiving saints into his bosom that they may rest there until the trumpet of the archangel sounds. We do not really grasp the rising again—

“ From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day.”

If we did, then our songs about dying would be more true, and our readiness to depart more abiding. For what is death? It is a pin’s prick at the worst, often scarce that,

the shutting of our eyes on earth and the opening of them in heaven. So rapid is the departure of the saint, the movement of the soul from the body here to the presence of the Lord yonder, that death is scarcely any thing, it is swallowed up in victory. O for the realization, then, of Jesus, and death would lose all its sting.

And once again, and this is the last illustration I will give on this point, I am afraid that in *Christian work* we very often fall into the same style of doubt. Here is an enterprise, and straightway if we are wise we realize the difficulties, if we are something more than wise we exaggerate these difficulties and conclude that with our slender means we shall never be able to grapple with them ; but ah ! why is it that we so seldom think of the living present Saviour, who is the church's Head ? Calculate the forces of the church if you will, but do not forget the most important item of all, the omnipotence of the Lord her King. Reckon up if you will all the weakness of her pastors, and teachers, and evangelists and members, but when you have done that, fancy not you have calculated all her resources, you have only considered the very fringe thereof ; the main body and the strength of the church lies in the fulness of the Godhead bodily, which dwells in the person of Jesus Christ. Shall heathendom be real ? shall priestcraft be real ? shall Romanism be real ? shall the corruption of the human heart and the alienation of the human will be real ? and shall I not equally realize the omnipotence of Christ in the realm of spirit, and the irresistible power of the Holy Ghost, who can turn men from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God ? Let not Christ be a phantom to his church. In her worst hours, though tossed like a ship in the storm, let her Lord, as he walks the waves, be real to her and she will do and dare right valiantly, and the results will be glorious. Thus much on the first point.

II. Secondly, the worst of it is that **WE MAKE CHRIST A**

PHANTOM MOST WHEN HE IS MOST REALLY CHRIST, most really revealed as the Son of the Highest.

Observe, my dear brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ walked on the land by the seashore, none of his disciples ever said, "It is a spirit:" none of them said, "It is an apparition;" yet they did not see Christ when he walked on the shore, on *terra firma*; they saw his manhood, that was all; there was no more to be seen of Christ as he walked there than there is to be seen of any other—simply a man, no Godhead is there revealed; but when Christ walked on the waves, there was more of Christ visible than there was on the land; then they saw his manhood, but they also saw his Godhead, who could make the liquid waves upbear him. There was most of Christ to be seen, and yet then they saw the least. Is it not strange where he uncovers most, we see least, where he reveals himself most clearly, our unbelieving eye is least able to see! Yet, mark you, Christ is never so truly Christ anywhere as when he works beyond the ordinary course of nature. He is Christ if he takes a little child upon his knee and blesses it, but more of the Christ is seen when he puts his hand upon the damsel, and raises her from the dead, or calls Lazarus out of the tomb. He is the Christ when he speaks a gentle word to a sorrowing heart, but oh, what a Christ he is when he says, "Winds be hushed, and waves be still!" Then is his glory laid open to faith's strengthened eye. Truly he is most himself when he is most above all others; when, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his thoughts above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways. And, brethren, we have never seen Christ unless we have seen him far above all others, and acting beyond the bounds of expectation and reasoning. The Christ is half hidden when he acts as another man. The whole Christ does not appear in the ordinary run of our affairs; it is in the extraordinary, the unusual, the unexpected, that we view the glory of Christ, and see him fully. So it is that we refuse most to discern and glorify him when

he is most openly displayed. Let me show my point. Christ, I say, walking on the sea, is most of all Christ there, and yet his disciples do not perceive him ; so in *the pardon of very great sin* you see the most of Christ ; yet whenever a man has fallen into a great sin, that is, a vile sin in the esteem of others, then he says, " Ah ! now I cannot be forgiven this." Why, man, Jesus is most truly Jesus when he pardons grievous iniquity. The putting away of your little transgressions as you have thought them to be, do you think this is all he came for—to redeem such as have a little fallen and a little transgressed ? Is he a little Saviour for little sinners to be little worshipped ? Oh ! but herein he comes to be Christ in deed and in truth, when bloody murders, black adulteries, scarlet blasphemies, and crimson filthinesses, are all washed away by his blood. Then see we him as " a Saviour and a great one," as one who is " mighty to save." Why is it that we will not discern him when he abundantly pardons ? Why, my brethren, do we honor him as he should be honored, if we only think that the sentimentalism of sin is put away by him ? If we own that the reality, the filthiness, the damnableness of sin is put away by Jesus, and trust him when our sins seem blackest, foulest, most abhorrent, then we do him honor and see him to be the Christ he is.

So again *in great distresses* of the soul. It pleases God often after conversion to allow the fountains of the great deeps of our corruption to be broken up, and we never felt before as we do then ; we had not expected this, and are overwhelmed with surprise to find ourselves such corrupt, such deceitful, such foul things. Then at the same time Satan will invade the heart with fierce temptations and diabolical insinuations, and, alas ! our suspicious spirits will imagine that Jesus himself cannot help us in such a condition. Oh but man, now is the time for the divine manifestation ! Now shall you see the Christ. Do you suppose that the Lord Jesus comes only to speak peace to those who have

peace already, or to give peace to those enduring a trifling disturbance of mind? Man, do you think Jesus a superfluity? Or do you imagine that he is only suited for little occasions? Be ashamed of such insinuations; for he reigns on high above tremendous storms; he rules the hugest waves and the most roaring floods: when all our nature 's vexed, when our hopes are gone, and our despair is uppermost, it is amid the tumult of such a tempest that he says, "Peace, be still," and creates a calm. Believe in the Christ who can save you when most your temptations threaten to swallow you up. Do not think him to be only able to save when you are not in extremities, but believe him to be best seen when your uttermost calamities are near.

I might select many other cases as illustrating this, but I will run over one or two in rapid review. We are perhaps enduring an *unusually severe trial*, and need more than usual support; but we fearfully say, "I cannot expect to be supported under this affliction." Ah! your Christ is a phantom, then. If you saw him you would know that there is nothing too hard for him, that the sustenance of a soul, when it is at its lowest famine point, is easy enough work for the divine Consolator, and you would cast yourself on him believingly, and not act towards him as now you do. Yes, but you need great supplies for the present time of distress; your circumstances are trying to the last degree. Do not, now that you need great supplies, make Christ to be poor and stinting in your esteem; but rather like Abraham, say, "The Lord will provide." Abraham, in extremity, when about to slay his son by God's command, finds that God interposes, and the ram is found for a burnt-offering. In your worst poverty Christ will interpose; Jesus will prove himself to be the Lord of heaven and earth. You shall see that in him all fulness dwells. Can you only rely upon Jesus in little and ordinary troubles? I know it is sweet to run to him in such times, but is he to be only an ordinary, fair-weather friend to cover you from little showers,

and walk with you when a little gale is blowing ; will he refuse to be with you in stormy weather, or to traverse with you the boisterous sea ? O do not so miserably spirit away the Saviour ! Do not phantomize the Redeemer when you want him in very deed. You have real poverty, and a real cross, and real difficulties ; now in the mount of the Lord shall it be seen that he is true to his word, and his name Jehovah-Jireh, across the darkness of your want shall be written as with letters of fire.

In times of *great* danger, again, we sometimes gloomily mutter, " Now we shall not be preserved ; Christ has kept us up till now, and we quite believe that he would do so if the circumstances of to-day were no worse than those of times gone by, but now we are extremely tempted, now we are violently assailed, now our sorrows multiply, will he help us now ? " Dare you say, " Will he ? " when you know that he cannot change ? Dare you say, " Can he ? " Is any thing too hard for the Lord ? Are you going to make your Saviour into a mere appearance ? He is a real Saviour, lean on him ; he will bring you safely through, cover you with his shield and keep off the fiery darts from you. He will not leave you or forsake you. Great deliverances ! alas ! we fancy that these will never occur ; Jesus will not work these as aforetime, so we wickedly imagine ; and if they are wrought, we are like Peter, who could not realize his escape from prison. He knew the saints had prayed for him, but when he was delivered from the prison, and found himself in the street of the city, he could not think it was a fact, he " wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. Often before God has delivered us, we have said, " It cannot be "—our Christ was only a spirit ; and when he has delivered us we have said, " I do not understand it, I am overwhelmed with amazement ; " the fact being, that we do not get such a grip of Christ as to be assured that he is real, present, mighty, gracious ; or if we did, we should receive even his greatest deliverances as natural proofs of

his goodness and greatness such as faith is warranted to expect. "Is it not surprising," said one, "that God should have heard my prayers, and have been so gracious to me in providence?" "No," said an old saint, whose long experience had taught her more of the Lord, "it does not surprise me, it is just like him, it is his way with his people. Oh, to feel that great mercy is like him; that it is what *we* should expect of God, that he should give great deliverances, should walk the waters of our griefs, and bid them cease their raging! It is a blessed faith which enables us to recognize Jesus on the waters, and to say, "I know it is Jesus, nobody but Jesus could act so wondrously; I might not have known him if I had seen him working in an ordinary way, or travelling like a common wayfarer, but here amidst extraordinary seasons I expected his help; if I never had seen him before, I expected to see him now; and now I do see him I am not amazed, though I am delighted. I looked for him, and knew that when the need of him was greatest, his coming would be sure." When faith brightens the eye of hope with the flash of expectation, joy is not far away.

I will only add that if we will but realize Christ, our *great successes* which will be sure to come, over spiritual foes within and over difficulties without, will again infallibly prove to us his reality; but the probabilities are that we shall think him not capable of giving us such great successes and shall coil on despondingly where we ought to have rejoiced in the Lord.

As to our ultimate future we have too often thought it will be hard *to die*, we have trembled at standing before the judgment-seat, we have read of the day of judgment, and thought, "How shall I bear it?" forgetting that we shall know our Redeemer better in death than before, and in the resurrection and in the glory that shall follow we shall see him more clearly revealed than now; and therefore we ought to think more of him and lean upon him in all the great con-

cerns of eternity with a great, a confident, and childlike faith.

III. But I must pass on to the third head. **OUR GREATEST SORROWS ARISE FROM OUR TREATING OUR LORD AS UNREAL.**

It is because of our attenuating, vaporizing, and spiriting, our Lord away and making him into a myth so often, instead of gripping him with a common-sense, practical, firm, realizing faith, that we suffer so much from our troubles. For, brethren, it is a sad cause of trouble to have a phantom Redeemer, a Saviour who cannot actually pardon sin when it comes to be great sin, a Saviour who gives us only a little indefinite hope about our guilt, but does not literally put it away. This is the seed-bed of all manner of evil weeds. I do not wonder if you are vexed with doubts and fears if you have not realized Christ. O that you would all learn to sing with Hart these precious lines—

"A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood **once ran**,
In hands, and feet, and side.

("Tis no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak ;
The same dear Man in heaven **now reigns**,
That suffered for our sake.)

This wondrous man, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God ;
He bought our souls from death and hell,
The price, his own heart's blood."

Beware, my brethren, of resting content with any thing short of faith in an actual, literal, living Mediator, for nothing but reality will be of any use to you in the matter. Of course, with a phantom Saviour for real sins, an apparition of a Redeemer for real bondage, you cannot find comfort. Of what use is the appearance of bread and the resemblance of water to famishing pilgrims in the desert? If you have

a phantom helper for real woes you are the worse for such help. If your Saviour does not actually and practically support you in times of need, and supply your wants and console you under depression, then in what respects are you better off than those who have no helper at all? Jesus is a friend indeed. His grace, love, and presence, are no fictions of all facts they are most sure. If I have to carry a real load, and then have a ghost to assist me, I am in truth unassisted. We want true power, force, and energy, in our helper, and all that faith sees in Jesus her Lord: but you will readily see how sorrows multiply where Jesus is lightly esteemed.

Besides, to some Christ is not only, as it were, an impalpable spirit, but he is really an indifferent, unfeeling spirit. Jesus to his disciples on the sea seemed as though he would have gone by them and left them to their fate, and we often dream that our gracious Lord is unmindful of us; at any rate, we forget that he is tenderly mindful of our case. It did not strike you when you were so poor last week that Jesus knew it, and was grieved for your affliction. You forget, dear brother, when you were trembling as you went into the pulpit, that Jesus knew you trembled, and would uphold you while bearing your testimony. Too seldom do we remember that—

“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears a part.”

Ah! good husband, you knew your wife pitied you, you noted well the tear-drop when she saw your grief. Ah! dear child, you knew your mother sorrowed for you. Ah, but if you did but know Christ, you would know this too, that he never puts you to an unnecessary pain, nor ever tries you with an unneeded trial. There is a needs be for *s. l.*, and he has sympathy for you in all.

Many a poor sinner even imagines Jesus to be an angry spirit, and he cries out for fear. He imagines that Jesus is wrathful and will reject him with indignation. Ah! thou

dost not truly realize my Saviour if thou thinkest he would ever reject any one who came to him. When on earth what a real Physician of souls he was ! he mingled with publicans and sinners ; he did not talk about them as people who ought to be looked after, but he actually went after them himself and suffered one of them to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. He was wont to touch diseased sinners with his finger as he healed them. He was not a dilettante Saviour, he did not come into this world to save us from suppositious sin and imaginary trouble. There is nothing which is more overlooked, but which ought to be better remarked about our Lord, than his common-sense practicalness. He is utterly devoid of sham and pretence. He is always in the gospel history as real as the scenes of life around him ; he never strikes you as theatrical and pretentious. May we all feel that he is really a loving Saviour, a tender Saviour, and a practical Saviour to us. May you know him, may you realize him, and then your sorrows will either come to an end, or be accepted with thanksgiving.

IV. Lastly, IF WE COULD BUT BE CURED OF THIS DESPERATE MISCHIEF, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WOULD HAVE A HIGHER PLACE IN OUR ESTEEM, AND MANY OTHER BENEFICIAL RESULTS WOULD FOLLOW.

For, first, did you notice that after the disciples knew it to be Christ, and he came into the ship with them, they said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God?" If you once realize Christ, you will know him in his person as you never will know him by all I can tell you, or you can read about him. You once read about a man, you saw his likeness in the "Illustrated News," you heard people talk about him, but at last you were in his company, and sat down with him, and then you say, "Now I know the man ; I did not before." Oh, if you can realize Christ so as to draw near to him by faith, you will feel that you now begin to know him in truth,

and, what is best, you will know him then with assurance. They said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God. You were persuaded that he is God by what you found in Scripture, but when you came to see him, when he became real to you, the doctrine of his Deity needed no arguments to support it, the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord, is woven into your very being. He is the Son of God to you, if to no one else. What did those mariner disciples when they saw that it was indeed Jesus who trod the wave? It is added, "They worshipped him." You will never worship a phantom, an image, an apparition. Know Jesus to be real, and straightway you prostrate yourself before him. Blessed God, blessed Son of Man, coming from heaven for me, bleeding for me, standing in glory, pleading for me, I had thought of thee and heard of thee, but now I see thee, what can I do but worship thee? It is the gasping of Christ that produces devotion; it is the mistiness of our thoughts about him that is the root of our undevout frames of mind. God gave us a firm hold of Christ, and we shall instinctively adore him.

They not only worshipped Christ, but they served him. Their worship was such that whatever he bade them do they did it, and the vessel was steered whither he would until it brought him to the other side where he wished to go. They who realize Christ are sure to obey him. I cannot obey that which floats before me like a cloud; but when I see the man, the God, and know him to be as real a person as myself, as much a matter-of-fact existence as my brother, then what he bids me do I do: my obedience becomes real just in proportion as the Master who commands it becomes real to my soul. Then it is, dear friends, that we become humbled in spirit. No man realizes Christ without also realizing himself, and being bowed down in self-humiliation. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." But with the humility comes a deep and profound joy and peace. With Christ in the vessel, known to

be there, we smile at the storm ; whether it continue or subside we are equally peaceful now that we have realized that Christ is with us. I do believe that the actualizing of their Lord is the main thing that Christians want ; they require, first and foremost, a real Leader, they want to grasp his reality, and feel his actual power. And is it needful for this that he should come here in person ? I trust not. If he were to appear this morning on this platform, and his servant should hide his head, you would say, "Behold the glorious sight, yonder is our Lord." I know your heads would bow to worship, and then you would open your eyes and gaze on him, and feast your souls with the sight, and then each one would say, "What can I do for him ?" And if the condescending Master gave you each leave to come and spread offerings at the feet of the Crucified, oh, what heaps of treasure would be brought ! Each one would feel, "I have not with me what I wish," but you would say, "Take all I have, my blessed Lord, for thou hast redeemed me with thy blood." Is not he just as dear to you now, though unseen ? Is not faith as mighty a faculty as sight ? Is it not "the evidence of things not seen ?" Is not Wesley's verse true ?—

"The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray ;
With strong, commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.
Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."

Does not faith make Jesus as real to us as our sight would do ? It should do so ; I pray it may. And then see how true will be your consecration, how abundant will be your service, how ready your thanksgiving, how abounding your offerings ! May God grant you grace to

get into this true position, both you who are saints and you who still are sinners, for in having a real Christ you will have the reality of every good. God give it you for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

VERY SINGULAR.

HE PUT HIS HOUSEHOLD IN ORDER AND HANGED HIMSELF."—2 Samuel xvii. 23.

AHITHOPHEL was a man of keen perception, and those who consulted him followed his advice with as much confidence as if he had been an oracle from heaven. He was a great master of diplomacy, versed in the arts of cunning, far-seeing, cautious, deep. He was for years the friend and counsellor of David, but thinking it politic to be on the popular side he left his old master that he might, like many other courtiers, worship the rising sun, and hold an eminent position under Absalom. This, to use diplomatic language, was not only a crime but a mistake; Absalom was not the man to follow the warnings of sagacity, and Ahithophel found himself supplanted by another councillor; whereat he was so incensed that he left Absalom, hurried home, arranged his personal affairs, and hanged himself in sheer vexation.

His case teaches us that the greatest wordly wisdom will not preserve a man from the utmost folly. Here was a man worthy to be called the Nestor of debate, who yet had not wit enough to keep his neck from the fatal noose. Many a man supremely wise for a time fails in the long run. The renowned monarch, sagacious for the hour, has ere long proved his whole system to be a fatal mistake. Instances there are near to hand where a brilliant career has ended in shame, a life of wealth closed in poverty, an empire col-

lapsed in ruin. The wisdom which contemplates only this life fails even in its own sphere. Its tricks are too shallow, its devices too temporary, and the whole comes down with a crash when least expected to fall. What sad cases have we seen from men who have been wise in policy who have utterly failed from lack of principle! For want of the spirit of honor and truth to establish them they have built palaces of ice which have melted before they were complete. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The wisdom which cometh from above is the only wisdom; the secular is folly until the sacred blends its golden stream therewith.

I desire to call your attention to the text on account of its very remarkable character. "*He put his house in order and hanged himself.*" To put his house in order showed that he was a prudent man: to hang himself proved that he was a fool. Herein is a strange mixture of discretion and desperation, mind and madness. Shall a man have wisdom enough to arrange his worldly affairs with care, and yet shall he be so sapless as to take his own life afterwards? As Bishop Hall pithily says, "Could it be possible that he should be careful to order his house who regarded not to order his impetuous passions? That he should care for his house who cared not for either body or soul?" Strange incongruity, he makes his will, and then because he cannot have his will, he wills to die. 'Tis another proof that madness is in the heart of the sons of men. Marvel not at this one display of folly, for I shall have to show you that the case of Ahithophel is in the spirit of it almost universal; and as I shall describe sundry similar individuals, many of you will perceive that I speak of you. Thousands set their houses in order but destroy their souls, they look well to their flocks and their herds, but not to their hearts' best interests. They gather broken shells with continuous industry, but they throw away priceless diamonds. They exercise forethought, prudence, care, everywhere but where they

are most required. They save their money but squander their happiness ; they are guardians of their estate but suicides of their souls. Many forms this folly takes, but it is seen on all hands, and the sight should make the Christian weep over the madness of his fellow men. May the series of portraits which will now pass before us, while they hold the mirror up to nature, also point us in the way of grace.

See before you, then, the portrait of AN ATTENTIVE SERVANT. He is faithful to his employers, and fulfils well the office to which he is appointed. He is up with the lark, he toils all day, he rests not till his task is done ; he neglects nothing which he undertakes. I see him among the throng, I will single him out, and talk with him. You have been engaged for years in farming. You have ploughed, and sown, and reaped, and gathered into the barn, and no one has done the work better than you, and yet, though you have been so careful in your labor, you have never sown to the Spirit, nor cared to reap life everlasting. You have never asked to have your heart ploughed with the gospel plough, nor sown with the living seed, and the consequence will be that at the last you will have no harvest but weeds and thistles, and you will be given over to eternal destruction. What ails you to care for the clover and the turnips, the cows and the sheep, but never for yourself, your truest self, your ever-existing soul ? What ! all this care about the field and no care about your heart ? All this toil for a harvest which the hungry shall eat up, and no care whatever about the harvest that shall last eternally !

Or you have been occupied all your life in a garden, and there what diligence you have shown, what taste in the training of the plants and flowers, what diligence in digging, planting, weeding, and watering ? Often has your employer congratulated himself that he has so careful a servant. You take a delight in your work, and well you may for some relics of Eden's memories linger around a garden still ; but how is

it that you are so choice with yonder tulip and so indifferent about your own spirit? What, care for a poor rose, which so soon is withered, and have no thought about your immortal nature? Is this like a reasonable man? You were very careful in the winter to keep up the heat of the greenhouse lest those feeble plants should suffer from the frost, have you, then, no care to be protected from temptation, and from the dread storms of almighty wrath which are so soon to come? Can it be that you are diligent in ordering the walks, and beds, and shrubberies of your master's grounds, and yet are utterly careless about the garden of your heart in which fairer flowers would bloom, and yield you a far richer reward? I marvel at you. It seems so strange that you should be so good a worker for others and so bad a carer about yourself. I fear your lament will have to be "They made me keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

It would be too long a task to dwell particularly on each of your employments, but I will hope that in each case you are anxious to do your work thoroughly, so as to secure approval. The horse is not badly fed, nor the carriage recklessly driven, nor the wall carelessly built, nor the wood ill planed—you would be ashamed to be called a negligent workman. Put it then to yourself, will you watch over another man's goods and be unmindful of your own highest good? What, do you mind the horse and the wagon, the parcels, and the errands, and all sorts of little matters, and shall that soul of yours, which will outlast the sun and live when stars grow dim, shall that be left without a thought? What, do you love others so much and yourself so little? Are minor matters to absorb all your thoughts while your own eternal concerns are left in utter neglect?

Some of you act as domestic servants, and endeavor to discharge your duties well; you have much to do from morning till night, and you would be ashamed for any one to say, "The room is unswept, cobwebs are on the walls.

the floors are filthy, the meals are badly cooked, because you are a bad servant." No, you feel rather proud that when you have a situation you can keep it, and that the mistress is content with you. Suffer me, then, to ask you in the gentlest manner, Is your heart never to be cleansed? Are your sins always to defile it? Have you no thought about "the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?" Do you think God made you to be a mere sweeper and cleaner of rooms, a cooker of meat, and so on, and that this is all you were designed for? There must be a higher and a better life for you, and do you altogether disregard it? Will you weary yourself, day by day, about another person's house, and have you no interest in your own soul? Have you so much care to please (as you should do) your master and mistress, and no care about being reconciled to God? I will not think that you are so bereft of reason.

I address a still larger class probably, if I say there are many here who will go off to the city in the morning to fulfil the duties of confidential accountants. You never suffer the books to be inaccurate, they balance to a farthing; it would distress you if, through your inadvertence, the firm lost even a sixpence. You have perhaps been many years with the same employers, and have their unbounded respect; from your boyhood to this day you have been connected with the house. I have known several admirable men, of high integrity and thorough faithfulness, whom their employers could never sufficiently value, for they laid themselves out with intense zeal to promote their commercial interests, and worked far harder than the heads of the house ever did. Had the whole concern been their own they could not have been more assiduous, and yet these very men gave no heed to their own personal interest for another world; it was grievous to observe that God was not in all their thoughts, nor heaven, nor hell, nor their own precious souls. You good and faithful servant of men, will you perish as unfaithful servants of God? What, will you never look onward

to the last great reckoning? Is it nothing to you that the debts due to divine justice are undischarged? Are you willing to be called before the Lord of all, and to hear him say, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, I gave thee a talent, but thou hast wrapped it in a napkin?" God forbid I should diminish one grain of your diligence from your secular avocations, but from the very zeal you throw into these, I charge you if ye be reasonable men see to it, that ye destroy not your own souls. Be not like Ahithophel, who set his house in order and hanged himself. Set not your master's concerns in order and then destroy your souls, for how shall you escape if you neglect the great salvation?

Look ye now to another picture—THE PRUDENT MERCHANT. I must briefly sketch him. He knows the ways of trade, studies the state of the market, is quick to perceive the opportunity of gain, has been cautious in his speculations, has secured what he has obtained, and is now in possession of a competency, or on the road to it. He prides himself in a quiet way upon the prudence with which he conducts all his worldly transactions—and my dear friend, I am sure I am glad to see you prudent in business, for such misery would be caused to others as well as to yourself by recklessness and folly. But I want to ask you if you are thoughtless about religion how is it that you can be so inconsistent? Do you study how to buy, and buy well, but will you never buy the truth? Do you put all that you get into a safe bank, but will you never lay up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt? You are wary in your speculations, but will you play so deep at hazard as to jeopardize your soul? You have been for years accustomed to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. will you never rise early to seek the Lord? Will you never prevent the night watches to find a Saviour? Is the body every thing? Is gold your god? Why, you are a man of intelligence and reading, and you know that there are higher considerations than those of business and

the state of trade. You do not believe yourself to be of the same generation as the brute that perisheth ; you expect to live in another state ; you have a book here which tells you what that life will be, and how it may be shaped for joy, or left to be drifted into endless sorrow. Am I a fanatic, my dear sir, if I respectfully put my hand on yours and say, "I beseech you think not all of the less and nothing of the greater, lest haply when you come to die, the same may be said of you as of a rich man of old, who had been as cautious and as careful as you: 'thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose will these things be which thou hast prepared?' I charge you, if you be prudent, prove it by being prudent about the weightiest of all concerns. If you be not after all a mere bragger as to prudence, a mere child enraptured with silly toys, then show your wisdom by following the wisest course." I have heard of one, the stewardess of an American vessel, who when the ship was sinking, saw heaps of gold coin scattered upon the cabin floor by those who had thrown it there in the confusion of their escape: she gathered up large quantities of it, wrapped it round her waist, and leaped into the water; she sank like a millstone, as though she had studiously prepared herself for destruction. I fear that many of you traders are diligently collecting guarantees for your surer ruin, planning to bury yourselves beneath your glittering hoards. Be wise in time. My voice, nay, my heart pleads with you for your soul's sake and for Christ's sake, be not like Ahithophel, who set his house in order and hanged himself. Take sure bond for enduring happiness, invest in indisputable securities, have done with infinite risks, and be assured for life everlasting.

A third photograph shall now be exhibited. This will describe a smaller, but a very valuable class of men, and if they were blessed of God how glad should I be—THE DILIGENT STUDENT. He seeks out the best of books to assist him in the pursuit of his branch of knowledge; he burns the

midnight oil, he is not afraid of toil, he cares not for throbbing brain and weary eye, but he presses on, he trains his memory, he schools his judgment, and all with the hope that he may be numbered with the learned. The examinations of his university are to him the most important periods in the calendar; his degree is the prize of his high calling. Knowledge is sweet, and the honor of being associated with the learned is coveted. My young friend, I would not for a moment abate your zeal, but I would beg space for one consideration worthy of immediate attention. Ought the best of sciences to be left to the last? Should self-knowledge and acquaintance with God be treated as of secondary importance? Should not the word of God be the chief volume in the wise man's library? Should you not burn the midnight oil to peruse the page infallible, written by the divine finger? With all your gettings, should you not get the understanding which cometh from above, and the knowledge which is the gift of God, and which will introduce you, if not among the learned, yet among the gracious; if not into the academy of *savans*, yet into the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven? Should there not be with you the wish to train your complete manhood, and to educate yourself to the fullness of the stature of what a man should be? Should not the noblest part have the chief care? I speak to a wise man; I would have him be truly wise; I would not have him set his study in order, and tutor himself and then forget the eternal life, and the destiny that awaits him. O student, seek thou first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and then shall thy temple of wisdom be built upon a rock.

I will take another character, a character which is very common in great cities—I am not sure but what it is common enough—THE REFORMING POLITICIAN. I value our politicians highly, but we scarcely need to be overstocked with

those who brawl in public houses and discussion rooms while their families are starving at home. Some men who spend a great deal of time in considering politics, are hardly benefiting the commonwealth to the extent they imagine. I will suppose I am addressing a man who feels the home and foreign affairs of the nation to be his particular department. Well, my respected friend, I trust you occupy a useful place in the general economy, but I want to ask you one or two questions well worthy of a reformer's or a conservative's consideration. You have been looking up abuses, have you no abuses in your own life which need correcting? There is no doubt about the Reform Bill having been needed, but do you not think a Reform Bill is needed by some of us, at home, in reference to our own characters, and especially in reference to our relation towards our God and our Saviour? I think only he who is ignorant of himself will deny that; and would it not be a fine thing to begin at home, and let the politics of our house and our heart be set quite right, and that immediately! You have in your brain a complete scheme for paying off the National Debt, elevating the nation, remodelling the navy, improving the army, managing the colonies, delivering France, and establishing the best form of government in Europe; I am afraid your schemes may not be carried out so soon as you desire; but may I not suggest to you that your own heart needs renewing by the Spirit of God, your many sins need removing by the atonement of Jesus, and your whole life requires a deep and radical change, and this is a practical measure which no aristocracy will oppose, which no vested interests will defeat, and which need not be delayed for another election or a new premier. I dare say you have faced much opposition, and expect to face much more in agitating the important question which you have taken up; but ah! my friend, will you not sometimes agitate questions with your conscience? Will you not discuss with your inner nature the great truths which God has revealed? Would it not be worth your

while at least to spend some time in your private council chamber with yourself thinking of the now, and of the past, and of the to come—considering God, Christ, heaven, hell, and yourself as connected with all these? I press it on you, it seems to me to be the greatest of all inconsistencies that a man should think himself able to guide a nation and yet should lose his own soul; that he should have schemes by which to turn this world into a paradise, and yet lose paradise for himself; that he should declaim violently against war, and all sorts of evils, and yet himself should be at war with God, himself a slave to sin. Shall he talk of freedom while he is manacled by his lusts and appetites? Shall he be enslaved by drink, and yet be the champion of liberty? He that teaches freedom should himself be free. It is ill to see a man contending for others, and a captive himself. To arrange the nation's affairs, and to destroy yourself is as foolish as Ahithophel, who ordered his house and hanged himself.

We will pass to another character, and how much of what I am now to utter may concern myself I pray God to teach me—THE ZEALOUS PREACHER. The character is no imaginary one, it is not suggested by bitterness, or colored by fanaticism, there have been such and will be such to the end; men who study the Scriptures, and are masters of theology, versed in doctrine, conversant with law; men who teach the lessons they have gathered, and teach them, eloquently and forcibly, warning their hearers of their sins, pointing out their danger, and pleading with them to lay hold on Christ, and life eternal, and yet—for all this they are themselves unconverted! They preach what they never felt, they teach what they never knew by experience. Brother ministers, I allude not to you any more than to myself, but of all men that live we are most called upon to watch lest our very office help us to be hypocrites; lest our position as teachers should bring upon us a double curse. Do

not let us seek the salvation of others and lose ourselves. To preach Christ and not to have him ; to tell of the fountain and not to be washed in it ; to speak of hell, and warn men to escape it, and yet go there ourselves ! God grant it may never be so with any of us ! But mark you, the point of this warning comes to many here who are not altogether ministers. You are not preachers, but you are Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, Bible women, or city missionaries. Then hear ye the same warning. Will you go round with those tracts from house to house, and yet have no religion in your own houses ? Oh, miserable souls ! who hath required it at your hands to teach others of God when you are not reconciled to God yourselves ? What can you teach those children in the Sabbath-school ? I say what can you teach those children, when you yourselves are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity ? May not the very words you spoke to your classes to-day rise up against you in the day of judgment and condemn you ? Do not be content to have it so. Do not point the way to others and run in another road yourself. Do not set others in order and slay your own selves.

I have another picture to look upon—it represents a CAREFUL PARENT. Many who may not have been included under other descriptions will be mentioned here. You love your children well and wisely ; so far as this world is concerned, you are careful and prudent parents. You were very watchful over them in their childhood, you were afraid that those infant sicknesses would take them to the grave. How glad you were, dear mother, when once again you could lift the little one from the bed and press it to your bosom, and thank God that it was recovering its health and strength. You have denied yourself a great deal for your children. When you were out of work, and struggling with poverty, you did not so much grieve for yourselves as for them, it was so hard to see your children wanting bread. You have been so pleased to clothe them, so glad to notice their open-

ing intellect, and you have many of you selected with great care places where they will receive a good education, and if you thought that any bad influence would come across their path, you would be on your guard at once. You wish your children to grow up patterns of virtue and good citizens, and you are right in all this. I wish that all felt as you do about their families, and that none were allowed to run loose in the streets, which are the devil's school. Now as you have been so careful about your children, may I ask you ought not your own soul to have some thought bestowed on it, some anxiety exercised about it? It is a child too, to be educated for the skies, to be nurtured for the Father's house above. Look in the babe's face and think of the care you give to it, and then turn your eyes inwardly upon your soul and say, "What care have I given to thee, my soul? I have left thee unwashed, unclothed, unhoused. No blood of Christ hath fallen on thee, my soul; no righteousness of Christ hath wrapped thee. For thee, my soul, my poor, poor soul, there is no heaven when thou must leave this body, for thee there is no hope but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. My soul forgive me that I have treated thee so ill, I will now think of thee and bow my knee and ask the Lord to be gracious to thee. I wish I could call upon you personally and press this matter upon you. Think that I am doing so; when you reach home think that I am following you there and saying to you, "If you care for your children care for your souls." Look at the boys and girls sleeping in their cots to-night, and if you are unconverted, say to yourself, "There they lie, the dear ones, they are little sermons to me; I will remember what the preacher said when I look at them. My God, My Father, I will turn to thee, do thou turn me and I shall be turned."

The last of my crayon sketches is one which may concern many, it is that of THE OUTWARD RELIGIONIST who yet is regardless of his own soul: it is oddest and strangest of all

that there should be such people. I have met with Protestants, flaming Protestants, I might add, raving Protestants, who nevertheless know no more about Protestantism than about the Theogony of Hesiod, and were they questioned as to what it is that was protested against by the Reformers, they would guess wide of the mark. Yet are they very concerned that our glorious constitution in church and state should be "thoroughly Protestant"—though I cannot for the life of me see what difference it would make to them. If they have no faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, what matters it to them how a man is justified? There are others, again, who are "Dissenters to the backbone," but yet sinners to their marrow. To ungodly men I say solemnly, What matters it what you are in these matters? The side which has the honor of your patronage is a loser by it in all probability. If you are leading bad lives, I am very sorry that you are Dissenters, you injure a good cause. What fools you must be to be so earnest about religions in which you have no concern! Many, again, are very orthodox, even to being strait-laced, and yet are unbelievers. If the preacher does not come up to their weight and measure, they denounce him at once, and have no word bad enough for him. But now, my friend, though I cannot say that I am altogether sorry that you think about doctrines and churches, let me ask you is it wise that you should set up for a judge upon a matter in which you have no share? You are vociferous for setting the church in order, but you are destroying your soul! If these things belonged to you, I could understand your zeal about them, but since you have nothing to do with them (and you have not if you have no faith), why do you look after other people, and let your own salvation go by default? It may be a very important thing to somebody how the Duke of Devonshire may lay out his estate at Chatsworth, but I am sure it is not to me, for I am in no degree a part proprietor with His Grace. So it may be very important to some people how such-and-such a doc-

trine is taught ; but how should you be zealous about it, when you are in no degree a part proprietor in it unless you have believed in Jesus Christ ? What startles me with some of you is, that you will cheerfully contribute for the support of a gospel in which you have never believed. There are those of you here to whom I am thankful for help in Christ's service ; you put your hand into your pocket, and are generous to the Lord's cause, how is it that you do this and yet refuse to give Jesus your heart ? I know you do not think you are purchasing his favor by your money, you know better than that, but what do you do it for ? Are you like those builders who helped Noah to build the ark, and then were drowned ? Do you help to build a lifeboat, and being yourself shipwrecked, do you refuse the assistance of the lifeboat ? You are strangely inconsistent. You keep God's Sabbaths, and yet you will not enter into his rest. You sing Christ's praises, and yet you will not trust him. You bow your heads in prayer, and yet you do not pray. You are anxious, too, sometimes, and yet that which would end all your anxiety, namely, submission to the gospel of Christ, you will not yield. Why is this ? Wherefore this strange behavior ? Will you bless others and curse yourselves ?

I speak to the whole of you who as yet have not believed in Jesus—what is it that you are destroying your souls with ? Every unbeliever is an eternal suicide, he is destroying his soul's hopes. What is your motive ? Perhaps some of you are indulging a pleasurable sin, which you cannot give up. I conjure you cast it from you ; though it be dear as the right eye, pluck it out, or useful as the right arm, cut it off and cast it from you. Suffer no temporary pleasures to lead you into eternal destruction. Escape for your life. Sweet sin will bring bitter death ; God give you grace to cast it away. Or is it some deadly error with which you are destroying your soul ? Have you a notion that it is a small thing to die unsaved ? Do you imag-

ine that by and by it will all be over and you can bear the temporary punishment? Dream not so! Not thus speaks the infallible word of God, though men would thus buoy up your spirits, and make your forehead brazen against the Most High. It is an awful thing fall into the hands of the living God. God grant you may not run that risk; and meet that fate. Or perhaps some self-righteous trust holds you back from Christ. You can destroy yourself with that as well as with sin. To trust to ourselves is deadly; only to trust to Jesus is safe. I will explain that to you and have done. Inasmuch as we had sinned against God, God must punish us; it is necessary that sin should be punished, or there could be no moral government. Now in order to meet that case, to have mercy upon men in conformity with justice, Jesus Christ the Son of God, came into the world, and became man, and as man, he took upon himself the sins of all his people, and was punished for them; and whosoever trusts Jesus is one of those for whom Jesus bore the smart. For whom he paid the debt. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, if thou dost trust thy soul with the Christ of Nazareth, thy sins which are many are forgiven thee; go in peace—thy soul is saved. But if thou puttest away from thee the Christ, who says, “Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth,” you may be very wise, and you may arrange your business cleverly, but for all that, you are no wiser than the great fool of my text, who set his house in order and hanged himself. God teach hearers and readers to be wise ere yet this year is gone. Amen.

THE END.



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